

THE SOCRATES BOOKLETS: V

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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LETTERS

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'*Socrates* Without any one teaching
him he will recover his knowledge for himself,
if he is only asked questions "

PLATO Meno

METHOD OF THE SERIES

This series is intended primarily for boys and girls of thirteen to fifteen. The pupil should first read right through each poem, essay, play or narrative in order to get a general knowledge of the subject-matter, but he may pass over obscure allusions or other difficulties. The whole comes before the part. In order that the teacher may be satisfied that this first reading has been done, a selection of questions is given which should be answered, either aloud or in writing, without the book. These questions are headed "A."

After this comes more detailed and intensive study, but it is important that this should not degenerate into a mere cramming of the memory. The pupil should re-read the whole or parts of his text not in order to "get it up," but in order to find things out. A selection of questions is therefore given which aims at indicating some of the chief things which the pupil should find out if he is to enter into the mind of the writer. These questions, for which the pupil should be allowed the free use of his book, are headed "B."

A few of the questions headed "B" are marked with an asterisk () to indicate that they are intended for older pupils.*

The pupil who, after obtaining a general knowledge of his subject-matter, has employed himself in making intelligent inquiries into it, may then profitably go further afield. For this purpose a selection is given of questions which involve reference to other books. The usefulness of these questions depends partly on the extent to which the pupil has access to the best English classics and to standard works of reference. But the teacher will often have such access even if the pupil has not. In this section again an asterisk () indicates that certain questions are intended for older pupils, and a number has been placed after those where reference is made to one of the books in the list given on the last page of this volume. This third set of questions is headed "C."*

It is hoped that the notes at the end will be of use or interest to adult readers. They are not primarily intended for the pupil.

PREFACE TO THIS VOLUME

If conversation was the great art of the eighteenth century, and letters its literature, then we are fortunate in having the essence of the genius of the century preserved in such quantity for us. Letters, at any rate, held a more important place in the lives of the average man and woman of that period than they do now.

They were written then, as they are now, by holiday makers and travellers, they were made the outlet of the culture and philosophy of the leisured thinker, but they were also written with the same relish and with almost equal volubility by the busiest of professional men.

Letters will always afford us the readiest insight into personality, we can hardly hope to appreciate or understand either Cowper or Dr Johnson fully without the help of their letters. But the letters of this century give us, too, a fairer and more adequate view of the period as a whole than do those of any other age. They were written with enjoyment and with artistry, they were regarded as worth preserving—some of them as worth their author's careful editing. Yet they were composed on the smallest provocation and with the greatest possible zest for detail. So that while they retain for us the gossip of eighteenth-century London, the wit and fashion of the courts of Europe, the dilettantism of Walpole, and the piquancy of Lady Montagu, they are not without the importance Dr Johnson assigns to letters. Here "you see systems in their elements, you discover actions in their motives."

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The letter from Lord Chesterfield to his godson is reprinted by permission of the Clarendon Press from *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, to his godson* (1890), and the three excerpts from Mrs Elizabeth Montagu's letters by permission of Messrs Constable and Co from *Mrs Montagu, Queen of the Blues* (1923)

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LETTERS

I

LETTERS FROM THE GREAT SATIRISTS

From SWIFT's Journal to Stella

Jan 21, 1710-11 *Morning* It has snowed terribly all night, and is vengeance cold I am not yet up, but cannot write long, my hands will freeze Is there a good fire, Patrick? Yes, sir Then I will rise come, take away the candle You must know I write on the dark side of my bedchamber, and am forced to have a candle till I rise, for the bed stands between me and the window, and I keep the curtains shut this cold weather So pray let me rise, and, Patrick, here, take away the candle *At night* — We are now here in high frost and snow, the largest fire can hardly keep us warm It is very ugly walking, a baker's boy broke his thigh yesterday I walk slow, make short steps, and never tread on my heel It is a good proverb the Devonshire people have

Walk fast in snow,
In frost walk slow,
And still as you go,
Tread on your toe

When frost and snow are both together,
Sit by the fire and spare shoe-leather

I dined to-day with Dr Cockburn, but will not do so again in haste, he has generally such a parcel of Scots with him

Feb 5 *Morning* — I am going this morning to see Prior, who dines with me at Mr Harley's, so I cannot

stay fiddling and talking with dear little brats in a morning, and it is still terribly cold Come, stand away, let me rise Patrick, take away the candle Is there a good fire?—So—up adazy *At night*—Mr Harley did not sit down till six, and I stayed till eleven, henceforth, I will choose to visit him in the evening, and dine with him no more, if I can help it It breaks all my measures, and hurts my health, my head is disorderly, but not ill, and I hope it will mend

Feb 6—Here has been such a hurry with the queen's birthday, so much fine clothes, and the court so crowded, that I did not go there All the frost is gone It thawed on Sunday, and so continues, yet ice is still on the Canal (I did not mean that of Laracor, but here in St James's Park), and boys sliding on it Did I not tell you Patrick has got a bird, a linnet, to carry over to Dingley? It was very tame at first, and it is now the wildest I ever saw He keeps it in a closet, where it makes a terrible litter, but I say nothing I am as tame as a clout When must we answer our MD's letter? one of these odd-come-shorthes This is a week old, you see, and no farther yet Mr Harley desired I would dine with him again to-day, but I refused him, for I fell out with him yesterday, and will not see him again till he makes me amends, and so I go to bed

Jan 9 1711-1712—I could not go sleep last night till past two, and was waked before three by a noise of people endeavouring to break open my window, for a while I would not stir, thinking it might be my imagination, but hearing the noise continued, I rose and went to the window, and then it ceased I went to bed again and heard it repeated, more violently, then I rose and called up the house, and got a candle the rogues had lifted up the sash a yard, there are great sheds before my windows, although

my lodgings be a storey high , and if they get upon the sheds they are almost even with my window We observed their track, and panes of glass fiesh broken The watchmen told us to-day they saw them, but could not catch them they attacked others in the neighbourhood about the same time, and actually robbed a house in Suffolk Street, which is the next street but one to us It is said they are seamen discharged from service I have this day got double iron bars to every window in my dining-room and bed-chamber , and I hide my purse in my thread stocking between the bed's head and the wainscot Lewis and I dined with an old Scotch friend, who brought the Duke of Douglas and three or four more Scots upon us

From GAY to Swift November 17, 1726

About ten days ago a Book was published here of the Travels of one Gulliver, which has been the conversation of the whole town ever since the whole impression sold in a week , and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely 'Tis generally said that you are the Author , but I am told, the Bookseller declares, he knows not from what hand it came

From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the Cabinet-council to the Nursery The Politicians to a man agree, that it is free from particular reflections, but that the Satire on general societies of men is too severe Not but we now and then meet with people of greater perspicuity, who are in search of particular applications in every leaf , and 'tis highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design Lord —— is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes most offence, being himself the most accomplished of his species, and so

losing more than any other of that praise which is due both to the dignity and virtue of a man Your friend, my Lord Harcourt, commends it very much, though he thinks in some places the matter too far carried The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it, she says she can dream of nothing else since she read it, she declares, that she has now found out that her whole life hath been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes, and that if she knew Gulliver, tho' he had been the worst enemy she ever had, she should give up her present acquaintances for his friendship

You may see by this, that you are not much injured by being supposed the Author of this piece If you are, you have disoblged us, and two or three of your best friends, in not giving us the least hint of it while you were with us, and in particular Dr Arbuthnot, who says it is ten thousand pities he had not known it, he could have added such abundance of things upon every subject Among Lady-critics, some have found out that Mr Gulliver had a particular malice to Maids of honour Those of them who frequent the Church, say his design is impious, and that it is depreciating the works of the Creator Notwithstanding, I am told the Princess has read it with great pleasure As to other Critics, they think the flying island is the least entertaining, and so great an opinion the town have of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing at all below himself, 'tis agreed that part was not writ by the same hand, tho' this hath its defenders too It hath passed Lords and Commons, *nemine contradicente*, and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it

Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of a Book you have never seen, and which hath not yet reached Ireland, if it hath not, I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend it to your reading, and that you will order me to send it to you

But it will be much better to come over yourself, and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentators, to explain the difficult passages to you

From ALEXANDER POPE

(1)

To Mariha Blount

Stanton Harcourt, 1717

Nothing could have more of that melancholy which once used to please me, than my last day's journey, for after having passed through my favourite woods in the forests, with a thousand reveries of past pleasures, I rid over hanging hills, whose tops were edged with groves, and whose feet watered with winding rivers, listening to the falls of cataracts below, and the murmuring of the winds above the gloomy verdure of Stonor succeeded to these, and then the shades of the evening overtook me

The moon rose in the clearest sky I ever saw, by whose solemn light I paced on slowly, without company, or any interruption to the range of my thoughts. About a mile before I reached Oxford, all the bells tolled in different notes, the clocks of every college answered one another, and sounded forth (some in a deeper, some a softer tone) that it was eleven at night. All this was no ill preparation to the life I have led since, among these old walls, venerable galleries, stone porticos, studious walks, and solitary scenes of the university. I wanted nothing but a black gown and a salary, to be as mere a book-worm as any there. I conformed myself to the college hours, was rolled up in books, lay in one of the most ancient, dusty parts of the university, and was as dead to the world as any hermit of the desert. If anything was alive or awake in me, it was a little vanity, such as even those good men used to entertain, when the monks *of their own order* extolled their piety and abstraction. For I found myself

received with a sort of respect, which this idle part of mankind, the learned, pay to their own species, who are as considerable here, as the busy, the gay, and the ambitious are in your world

Indeed I was treated in such a manner, that I could not but sometimes ask myself, in my mind, what college I was founder of, or what library I had built Methinks, I do very ill to return to the world again, to leave the only place where I make a figure, and, from seeing myself seated with dignity on the most conspicuous shelves of a library, put myself in the abject posture of lying at a lady's feet in St James's-square

(11)

To Edward Blount

Twickenham, June 2, 1725

You show yourself a just man and a friend in those guesses and suppositions you make at the possible reasons of my silence, every one of which is a true one As to forgetfulness of you and yours, I assure you the promiscuous conversations of the town serve only to put me in mind of better, and more quiet, to be had in a corner of the world (undisturbed, innocent, serene, and sensible) with such as you Let no access of any distrust make you think of me differently in a cloudy day from what you do in the most sunshiny weather Let the young ladies be assured I make nothing new in my gardens without wishing to see the print of their fairy steps in every part of 'em

I have put the last hand to my works of this kind, in happily finishing the subterraneous way and Grotto I there found a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual rill, that echoes through the cavern day and night From the river Thames you see through my arch, up a walk of the wilderness, to a kind of open Temple, wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner, and from

that distance under the Temple you look down through a sloping arcade of trees, and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as through a perspective glass. When you shut the doors of this Grotto, it becomes on the instant, from a luminous room, a *camera obscura*, on the walls of which all the objects of the river, hills, woods and boats are forming a moving picture in their visible radiations, and, when you have a mind to light it up, it affords you a very different scene, it is finished with shells, interspersed with pieces of looking-glass in angular forms, and in the ceiling is a star of the same material, at which when a lamp (of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster) is hung in the middle, a thousand pointed rays glitter, and are reflected over the place.

There are connected to this Grotto by a narrower passage two porches with niches and seats—one towards the river, of smooth stones full of light, and open, the other towards the arch of trees, rough with shells, flints, and iron-ore. The bottom is paved with simple pebbles, as the adjoining walk up the wilderness to the Temple is to be cockle-shells, in the natural taste, agreeing not ill with the little dripping murmurs, and the aquatic idea of the whole place. It wants nothing to complete it but a good statue, with an inscription, like that beautiful antique one which you know I am so fond of —

Nymph of the grot, these sacred springs I keep,
And to the murmurs of these waters sleep
Ah, spare my slumbers, gently tread the Cave!
And drink in silence or in silence lave

You will think I have been very poetical in this description, but it is pretty near the truth. I wish you were here to bear testimony how little it owes to art, either the place itself or the image I give of it.

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What do you gather from Swift's letters of his personal tastes and habits?
- 2 Can you form a clear picture of his surroundings from the hints he gives?
- 3 What would Stella, away in Ireland, be interested to hear? Do you think Swift's letters would be likely to satisfy her?
- 4 What does Gay say of the effect of *Gulliver's Travels* on London?
- 5 Describe the University scenes in which Pope takes delight
- 6 What welcome does he receive and why does he appreciate it?
- 7 Describe Pope's Grotto

B

- 1 Can you detect here any clue to the less happy side of Swift's character?
- 2 Compare Swift's type of letter writing with that of Pope and Dr Johnson. Could either of these writers have written so easily and intimately of their everyday life?
- 3 Swift had no idea that his letters would ever be printed. Why is this so obvious? What effect has it on his style?
- 4 How does Pope turn an excuse into a compliment?
- 5 What clue do these letters give you to the type of surroundings in which Pope was most at home?
- 6 Does the letter on Oxford throw any light on the character of Pope?
- 7 Comparing Pope's with Swift's letters, do you see any signs of artificiality or insincerity in them?

C

- 1 What qualities have Swift's letters in common with *Gulliver's Travels*?¹
- 2 How has Swift developed his natural talent for lively comment and easy description so as to produce such an excellent story as *Gulliver's Travels*?
- 3 Compare Swift's (a) powers of observation (b) satire, with Addison's. Which is the happier and which do you consider would have the greater effect on the public?⁴
- 4 Read *The Rape of the Lock*, in which Pope has made a delightful mockery of 'the promiscuous conversations of the town'. What is the secret of his method? The delight he takes in his Grotto will help to indicate this.⁵
- *5 Read *A Tale of a Tub*. Compare it with *Gulliver's Travels*. Can you see how the *Journal to Stella* acts as a half-way house between them?²
- *6 "That melancholy which once used to please me". Read Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. What are the aspects of romance that appeal to him?³

II

SOME LETTERS FROM IMAGINARY CORRESPONDENTS

LONDON CRIES

From SPECTATOR, No 251 (Tuesday, December 18, 1711)

[By Joseph Addison]

Sir,

I am a man out of all business, and would willingly turn my head to anything for an honest livelihood. I have invented several projects for raising many millions of money without burdening the subject, but I cannot get the Parliament to listen to me, who look upon me, forsooth, as a crank, and a projector, so that, despairing to enrich either myself or my country by this public-spiritedness, I would make some proposals to you relating to a design which I have very much at heart, and which may procure me a handsome subsistence, if you will be pleased to recommend it to the cities of London and Westminster.

The post I would aim at is to be comptroller-general of the London Cries, which are at present under no manner of rules or discipline. I think I am pretty well qualified for this place, as being a man of very strong lungs, of great insight into all branches of our British trades and manufactures, and of a competent skill in music.

The Cries of London may be divided into vocal and instrumental. As for the latter, they are at present under a very great disorder. A freeman of London has the privilege of disturbing a whole street for an hour together, with the twanking of a brass-kettle or frying-pan. The

watchman's thump at midnight startles us in our beds as much as the breaking in of a thief. The sow-gelder's horn has indeed something musical in it, but this is seldom heard within the liberties. I would therefore propose, that no instrument of this nature should be made use of, which I have not tuned and licensed, after having carefully examined in what manner it may affect the ears of her Majesty's liege subjects.

Vocal cries are of a much larger extent, and indeed so full of incongruities and barbarisms, that we appear a distracted city to foreigners who do not comprehend the meaning of such enormous outcries.

Milk is generally sold in a note above E-la, and in sounds so exceedingly shrill, that it often sets our teeth on edge. The chimney-sweeper is confined to no certain pitch, he sometimes utters himself in the deepest bass, and sometimes in the sharpest treble, sometimes in the highest, and sometimes in the lowest, note of the gamut. The same observation might be made on the retailers of small coal, not to mention broken glasses, or brickdust. In these, therefore, and the like cases, it should be my care to sweeten and mellow the voices of these itinerant tradesmen, before they make their appearance in our streets, as also to accommodate their cries to their respective wares, and to take care in particular, that those may not make the most noise who have the least to sell, which is very observable in the vendors of card-matches, to whom I cannot but apply that old proverb of "Much cry, but little wool."

Some of these last-mentioned musicians are so very loud in the sale of these trifling manufactures, that an honest splenetic gentleman of my acquaintance bargained with one of them never to come into the street where he lived. But what was the effect of this contract? Why the whole tribe of card-matchmakers that frequent that quarter passed by his door the very next day, in hopes of being bought off after the same manner.

It is another great imperfection in our London Cries, that there is no just time nor measure observed in them. Our news should indeed be published in a very quick time, because it is a commodity that will not keep cold. It should not, however, be cried with the same precipitation as fire. Yet this is generally the case. A bloody battle alarms the town from one end to another in an instant. Every motion of the French is published in so great a hurry, that one would think the enemy were at our gates. Thus likewise I would take upon me to regulate in such a manner, that there should be some distinction made between the spreading of a victory, a march, or an encampment, a Dutch, a Portugal, or a Spanish mail. Nor must I omit under this head those excessive alarms with which several boisterous rustics infest our streets in turnip-season, and which are more inexcusable, because these are wares which are in no danger of cooling upon their hands.

There are others who affect a very slow time, and are, in my opinion, much more tuneable than the former. The cooper in particular swells his last note in a hollow voice, that is not without its harmony, nor can I forbear being inspired with a most agreeable melancholy, when I hear that sad and solemn air with which the public are very often asked, if they have any chairs to mend. Your own memory may suggest to you many other lamentable ditties of the same nature, in which the music is wonderfully languishing and melodious.

I am always pleased with that particular time of the year which is proper for the pickling of dill and cucumbers, but alas! this cry, like the song of the nightingale, is not heard above two months. It would therefore be worth while to consider, whether the same air might not in some cases be adapted to other words.

It might likewise deserve our most serious consideration, how far, in a well-regulated city, those humourists are to be tolerated, who, not contented with the traditional cries

of their forefathers, have invented particular songs and tunes of their own, such as was, not many years since, the pastryman, commonly known by the name of the Colly-Molly-Puff, and such as is this day the vender of powder and wash-balls, who, if I am rightly informed, goes under the name of Powder-Wat

I must not here omit one particular absurdity which runs through this whole vociferous generation, and which renders their cries very often not only incommodious, but altogether useless to the public. I mean, that idle accomplishment which they all of them aim at, of crying so as not to be understood. Whether or no they have learnt this from several of our affected singers, I will not take upon me to say, but most certain it is, that people know the wares they deal in rather by their tunes than their words, insomuch that I have sometimes seen a country boy run out to buy apples of a bellows-mender, and gingerbread from a grinder of knives and scissors. Nay, so strangely infatuated are some very eminent artists of this particular grace in a cry, that none but their acquaintances are able to guess at their profession.

Forasmuch, therefore, as persons of this rank are seldom men of genius or capacity, I think it would be very proper that some man of good sense and sound judgment should preside over these public cries, who should permit none to lift up their voices in our streets that have not tuneable throats, and are not only able to overcome the noise of the crowd, and the rattling of coaches, but also to vend their respective merchandises in apt phrases, and in the most distinct and agreeable sounds. I do therefore humbly recommend myself as a person rightly qualified for this post, and if I meet with fitting encouragement, shall communicate some other projects which I have by me, that may no less conduce to the emolument of the public

I am, Sir, etc ,

RALPH CROTCHET

THE DEATH OF SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

From SPECTATOR, No 517 (Thursday, October 23, 1712)

[By Joseph Addison]

Honoured Sir,

Knowing that you was my old master's good friend, I could not forbear sending you the melancholy news of his death, which has afflicted the whole country, as well as his poor servants, who loved him, I may say, better than we did our lives. I am afraid he caught his death the last county-sessions, where he would go to see justice done to a poor widow woman, and her fatherless children, that had been wronged by a neighbouring gentleman, for you know, Sir, my good master was always the poor man's friend. Upon his coming home, the first complaint he made was, that he had lost his roast-beef stomach, not being able to touch a sirloin, which was served up according to custom, and you know he used to take great delight in it. From that time forward he grew worse and worse, but still kept a good heart till the last. Indeed we were once in great hope of his recovery, upon a kind message that was sent him from the widow lady whom he had made love to the last forty years of his life, but this only proved a lightning before death. He has bequeathed to this lady, as a token of his love, a great pearl necklace, and a couple of silver bracelets set with jewels, which belonged to my good old lady his mother. He has bequeathed the fine white gelding that he used to ride a hunting upon to his chaplain, because he thought he would be kind to him, and has left you all his books. He has, moreover, bequeathed to the chaplain a very pretty tenement with good lands about it. It being a very cold day when he made his will, he left for mourning to every man in the parish a great frieze-coat, and to every woman a black riding-hood.

It was a most moving sight to see him take leave of his

poor servants, commending us all for our fidelity, whilst we were not able to speak a word for weeping. As we most of us are grown gray-headed in our dear master's service, he has left us pensions and legacies, which we may live very comfortably upon the remaining part of our days. He has bequeathed a great deal more in charity, which is not yet come to my knowledge, and it is peremptorily said in the parish, that he has left money to build a steeple to the church, for he was heard to say some time ago, that if he lived two years longer, Coverley Church should have a steeple to it.

The chaplain tells everybody that he made a very good end, and never speaks of him without tears. He was buried, according to his own directions, among the family of the Coverleys, on the left hand of his father Sir Arthur. The coffin was carried by six of his tenants, and the pall held up by six of the quorum. The whole parish followed the corpse with heavy hearts, and in their mourning suits, the men in frieze, and the women in riding-hoods. Captain Sentry, my master's nephew, has taken possession of the Hall-house, and the whole estate. When my old master saw him a little before his death, he shook him by the hand, and wished him joy of the estate which was falling to him, desiring him only to make a good use of it, and to pay the several legacies, and the gifts of charity, which he told him he had left as quit-rents upon the estate. The captain truly seems a courteous man, though he says but little. He makes much of those whom my master loved, and shows great kindness to the old house-dog, that you know my poor master was so fond of. ✓ It would have gone to your heart to have heard the moans the dumb creature made on the day of my master's death. He has never enjoyed himself since, no more has any of us. 'Twas the melancholiest day for the poor people that ever happened in Worcestershire. This being all from,

Honoured Sir, your most sorrowful servant,

EDWARD BISCUIT

FROM EVELINA TO HER GUARDIAN

[By Fanny Burney]

Queen Ann Street,
London

Saturday, April 2

This moment arrived Just going to Drury Lane theatre
The celebrated Mr Garrick performs *Ranger* I am quite
in extasy So is Miss Mirvan How fortunate that he
should happen to play! We would not let Mrs Mirvan rest
till she consented to go, her chief objection was to our
dress, for we have had no time to *Londonize* ourselves, but
we teased her into compliance, and so we are to sit in some
obscure place, that she may not be seen As to me, I
should be alike unknown in the most conspicuous or most
private part of the house

I can write no more now I have hardly time to breathe
—only just this, the houses and streets are not quite so
superb as I expected However, I have seen nothing yet,
so I ought not to judge

Well, adieu, my dearest Sir, for the present, I could not
forbear writing a few words instantly on my arrival, though
I suppose my letter of thanks for your consent is still on
the road

Saturday night

Oh, my dear Sir, in what raptures am I returned! Well
may Mr Garrick be so celebrated, so universally admired
—I had not any idea of so great a performer

Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in
his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes!—I could
hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every
word seemed to be uttered from the impulse of the moment.

His action—at once so graceful and so free!—his voice
—so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its
tones!—Such animation! 'every look *speaks*!

I would have given the world to have had the whole play acted over again And when he danced—O, how I envied Clarinda! I almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined them

I am afraid you will think me mad, so I won't say any more, yet, I really believe Mr Garrick would have made you mad too, if you could see him I intend to ask Mrs Mirvan to go to the play every night while we stay in town She is extremely kind to me, and Maria, her charming daughter, is the sweetest girl in the world

I shall write to you every evening all that passes in the day, and that in the same manner as, if I could see, I should tell you

Sunday

This morning we went to Portland Chapel, and afterwards we walked in the Mall of St James's Park, which by no means answered my expectations it is a long straight walk, of dirty gravel, very uneasy to the feet, and at each end, instead of an open prospect, nothing is to be seen but houses built of brick When Mrs Mirvan pointed out the *Palace* to me—I think I was never much more surprised

However, the walk was very agreeable to us, everybody looked gay, and seemed pleased,—and the ladies were so much dressed, that Mrs Mirvan and I could do nothing but look at them Mrs Mirvan met several of her friends No wonder, for I never saw so many people assembled together before I looked about for some of *my* acquaintance, but in vain, for I saw not one person that I knew, which is very odd, for all the world seemed there

Mrs Mirvan says we are not to walk in the Park again next Sunday, even if we should be in town, because there is better company in Kensington Gardens, but really, if you had seen how much everybody was dressed, you would not think that possible

Monday

We are to go this evening to a private ball, given by Mrs Stanley, a very fashionable lady of Mrs Mirvan's acquaintance

We have been *a-shopping*, as Mrs Mirvan calls it, all the morning, to buy silks, caps, gauzes, and so forth

The shops are really very entertaining, especially the mercers, there seem to be six or seven men belonging to each shop, and every one took care, by bowing and smirking, to be noticed, we were conducted from one to another, and carried from room to room, with so much ceremony, that at first I was almost afraid to go on

I thought I should never have chosen a silk for they produced so many, I knew not which to fix upon, and they recommended them all so strongly, that I fancy they thought I only wanted persuasion to buy everything they shewed me And, indeed, they took so much trouble, that I was almost ashamed I could not

At the milliners, the ladies we met were so much dressed that I should rather have imagined they were making visits than purchases But what most diverted me was, that we were more frequently served by men than by women, and such men! so finical, so affected! they seemed to understand every part of a woman's dress better than we do ourselves, and they recommended caps and ribands with an air of so much importance, that I wished 'to ask them how long they had left off wearing them'

The despatch with which they work in these great shops is amazing, for they have promised me a complete suit of linen against the evening

I have just had my hair dressed You can't think how oddly my head feels, full of powder and black pins, and a great *cushion* on the top of it I believe you would hardly know me, for my face looks quite different to what it did before my hair was dressed When I shall be able to make

use of a comb for myself I cannot tell, for my hair is so much entangled, *frizzled* they call it, that I fear it will be very difficult

I am half afraid of this ball to-night, for, you know, I have never danced but at school, however, Miss Mirvan says there is nothing in it Yet I wish it was over

Adieu, my dear Sir, pray excuse the wretched stuff I write, perhaps I may improve by being in this town, and then my letters will be less unworthy your reading Mean time, I am,

Your dutiful and affectionate, though unpolished,

EVELINA

Poor Miss Mirvan cannot wear one of the caps she made, because they dress her hair too large for them

*FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI O FUM HOAM, FIRST
PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY
AT PEKIN IN CHINA*

CITIZEN OF THE WORLD Letter lxxvi

[By Oliver Goldsmith]

The shops of London are as well furnished as those of Pekin Those of London have a picture hung at their door, informing the passengers what they have to sell, as those at Pekin have a board to assure the buyer that they have no intent to cheat him

I was this morning to buy silk for a night-cap Immediately upon entering the mercer's shop, the master and his two men, with wigs plastered with powder, appeared to ask my commands They were certainly the civillest people alive, if I but looked, they flew to the place where I cast my eye, every motion of mine sent them running round the whole shop for my satisfaction I informed them that

I wanted what was good, and they showed me not less than forty pieces, and each was better than the former, the prettiest pattern in nature, and the fittest in the world for nightcaps

"My very good friend," said I to the mercer, "you must not pretend to instruct me in silks, I know these in particular to be no better than your mere flimsy Bungees "

"That may be," cried the mercer, who I afterwards found had never contradicted a man in his life, "I cannot pretend to say but they may, but, I can assure you, my Lady Trail has had a sacque from this piece this very morning "

"But, friend," said I, "though my lady has chosen a sacque from it, I see no necessity that I should wear it for a night-cap "

"That may be," returned he again, "yet what becomes a pretty lady, will at any time look well on a handsome gentleman "

This short compliment was thrown in so very seasonably upon my ugly face, that, even though I disliked the silk, I desired him to cut me off the pattern of a night-cap *

While this business was consigned to his journeyman, the master himself took down some pieces of silk still finer than any I had yet seen, and spreading them before me, "There," cries he, "there's beauty, my Lord Snakeskin has bespoke the fellow to this for the birth-night this very morning, it would look charmingly in waistcoats "

"But I don't want a waistcoat," replied I

"Not want a waistcoat?" returned the mercer, "then I would advise you to buy one, when waistcoats are wanted, you may depend upon it they will come dear. Always buy before you want, and you are sure to be well used, as they say in Cheapside "

There was so much justice in his advice, that I could not refuse taking it, besides, the silk, which was really a good one, increased the temptation, so I gave orders for that too

As I was waiting to have my bargains measured and cut, which, I know not how, they executed but slowly, during the interval the mercer entertained me with the modern manner of some of the nobility receiving company in their morning gowns

"Perhaps, sir," adds he, "you have a mind to see what kind of silk is universally worn "

Without waiting for my reply, he spreads a piece before me which might be reckoned beautiful even in China

"If the nobility," continues he, "were to know I sold this to any under a Right Honourable, I should certainly lose their custom, you see, my lord, it is at once rich, tasty, and quite the thing "

"I am no lord," interrupted I

"I beg pardon," cried he, "but be pleased to remember, when you intend buying a morning-gown, that you had an offer from me of something worth money Conscience, sir, conscience is my way of dealing, you may buy a morning-gown now, or you may stay till they become dearer and less fashionable, but it is not my business to advise "

In short, most reverend Fum, he persuaded me to buy a morning-gown also, and would probably have persuaded me to have bought half the goods in his shop, if I had stayed long enough, or was furnished with sufficient money

Upon returning home, I could not help reflecting, with some astonishment, how this very man, with such a confined education and capacity, was yet capable of turning me as he thought proper, and moulding me to his inclinations! I knew he was only answering his own purposes, even while he attempted to appear solicitous about mine, yet, by a voluntary infatuation, a sort of passion compounded of vanity and good-nature, I walked into the snare with my eyes open, and put myself to future pain, in order to give him immediate pleasure The wisdom of the ignorant

somewhat resembles the instinct of animals, it is diffused in but a very narrow sphere, but within that circle it acts with vigour, uniformity, and success Adieu

TIMOTHY TORTOISE TO MISS HECKY MULSO

[By Gilbert White]

From the border under the fruit wall,

Aug 31, 1784

Most Respectable Lady,

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, being the first that ever I was honoured with It is my wish to answer you in your own way, but I could never make a verse in my life, so you must be content with plain prose

Having seen but little of this great world, conversed but little, and read less, I feel myself much at a loss how to entertain so intelligent a correspondent Unless you will let me write about myself, my answer will be very short Know, then, that I am an American, and was born in the year 1734, in the province of Virginia, in the midst of a Savanna that lay between a large tobacco-plantation and a creek of the sea Here I spent my youthful days among my relations with much satisfaction, and saw around me many venerable kinsmen who had attained to great ages, without any interruption from distempers Longevity is so general among our species that a funeral is quite a rare occurrence I can just remember the death of my great-great-grandfather, who departed this life in the 160th year of his age Happy should I have been in the enjoyment of my native climate, and the society of my friends, had not a sea-boy, who was wandering about to see what he could pick up, surprised me, as I was sunning myself under a bank, and whipping me into his wallet, carried me aboard his ship The circumstances of our voyage are not worthy a recital I only remember that the rippling of the water

against the sides of our vessel as we sailed along was a very lulling and composing sound, which served to soothe my slumbers as I lay in the hold. We had a short voyage and came to anchor on the coast of England, in the harbour of Chichester. In that city my kidnapper sold me for half a crown to a country gentleman who came up to attend an election. I was immediately packed in a hand-basket, and carried slung by the servant's side to their place of abode. As they rode very hard for miles, and as I had never been on horseback before, I found myself somewhat giddy with my airy jaunt. My purchaser, who was a great humourist, after showing me to some of his neighbours, and giving me the name of Timothy, took little further notice of me, so I fell under the care of his lady, a benevolent woman, whose humane attention extended to the meanest of her retainers. With this gentlewoman I remained almost 40 years, living in a little walled-in-court in the front of her house, and enjoying much quiet, and as much satisfaction as I could expect without society, which I often languished after. At last the good old lady died in a very advanced age such as a tortoise would call a great age, and I then became the property of her nephew. This man, my present master, dug me out of my winter-retreat, and packing me in a deal-box, jumbled me eighty miles in post-chaises to my present place of abode. I was sore shaken by this expedition, which was the worst journey I ever experienced.

In my present situation I enjoy many advantages such as the range of an extensive garden affording a variety of sun and shade, and abounding in lettuces, poppies, kidney-beans, and many other salubrious and delectable herbs and plants, and especially with a great choice of delicate gooseberries! But still at times I miss my good old mistress, whose grave and regular deportment suited best with my disposition. For you must know, that my master is what men call a *naturalist*, and much visited by people of that

turn, who often put him on whimsical experiments such as feeling my pulse, putting me in a tub of water to try if I can swim, etc., and twice in the year I am carried to the grocer's to be weighed, that it may be seen how much I am wasted during the months of my abstinence, and how much I gain by feasting in the summer. Upon these occasions I am placed in the scale upon my back where I sprawl about to the great diversion of the shopkeeper's children. These matters displease me, but there is another that much hurts my pride, I mean the *contempt shown* for my *understanding*, which these *Lords of the creation* are very apt to discover, thinking that nobody knows anything but themselves. I heard my master say that he expected that I should some day tumble down the ha-ha, whereas I would have him to know that I can discern a precipice from plain ground as well as himself.

These are some of my grievances, but they sit very light on me, in comparison of what remains behind. Know then, tender-hearted lady, that my greatest misfortune, and what I have never divulged to anyone before is—the want of society with my own kind. This reflection is always uppermost in my mind, but comes upon me with irresistible force every spring. It was in the month of May last that I was resolved to elope from my place of confinement, for my fancy had represented to me that, probably many agreeable Tortoises of both sexes might inhabit the heights of *Baker's Hill*, or the extensive plains of the neighbouring *meadow*, both of which I could discern from the terrass. One sunny morning I watched my opportunity, found the wicket open, eluded the vigilance of the gardener, and escaped into the saint-foin, which began to be in bloom, and thence to the beans. I was missing eight days, wandering in this wilderness of sweets, and exploring the meadow at times. But my pains were all to no purpose, I could find no society, such as I sought for. I began to grow hungry, and to wish myself at home. I therefore came

forth in sight, and surrendered myself up to Thomas, who had been inconsolable in my absence

Thus, Madam, have I given you a faithful account of my satisfactions and sorrows, the latter of which are mostly uppermost. You are a lady, I understand, of much sensibility. Let me therefore make my case your own in the following manner, and then you will be judge of my feelings. Suppose you were to be kidnapped away *to-morrow* in the bloom of your life, to a land of Tortoises, and were never to see again a human face for fifty years!!! Think on this, dear lady, and pity

Your sorrowful reptile,

TIMOTHY

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What are the "instrumental" cries of London?
- 2 Sum up the various charges Ralph Crotchet makes against the criers
- 3 What information does this letter give us of the petty trades of London at the time? How do they differ from our own?
- 4 The letter from Edward Biscuit describes the last scenes in the life of a country gentleman. What is the cause of his death and what are the terms of his will?
- 5 What picture could you draw of the household and estate of Sir Roger?
- 6 What light is here thrown on his character and life?
- 7 What are the particular delights that appeal to Evelina, a country girl?
- 8 What does she say of the famous actor Garrick?
- 9 Describe her impression of St. James's Park
- 10 Show how the Chinaman is gradually persuaded into making one purchase after another, each more expensive than the last
- 11 Why does the mercer mention Cheapside?
- 12 What points of character in his victim does the good shopkeeper bear in mind? How does Lien Chi sum up his skill?
- 13 Has Goldsmith attempted to make his foreigner markedly Chinese?
- 14 On what peculiarity of tortoises does Gilbert White lay most stress?
- 15 How does Timothy suffer at the hands of his naturalist master?
- 16 What is his greatest grievance?

B

1 How far do you think the real writer of Ralph Crotchet's letter is seriously criticising the system of crying in the streets?

2 How does he bring out the character of this typical "writer to the papers"?

3 Show how the style apart from the subject of this letter carries out one of the principal aims of a newspaper which is to amuse

4 Wherein lies the pathos of the letter on the death of Sir Roger?

5 What humorous or satirical touches can you discover in it? Do these mar or heighten the effect?

6 How has Addison contrived to make this read as though it were actually the letter of an old family servant?

7 What is Evelina's aim in writing and what effect has it on her method?

8 This letter occurs in the early stages of the story Fanny Burney is telling. What details in it give promise of a new episode in the novel?

9 What impression does the heroine of the letter make and how does she compare with the friends she mentions?

10 Taking the Chinese philosopher's experience as a model, describe more fully the shopping expedition of Evelina

11 How does the stock and system of the eighteenth century shop differ from that of the modern large store? Can you account for the change?

12 How does Gilbert White show his sympathy with and understanding of animals?

13 In what way does the tortoise show himself a student of human nature?

14 Do you consider that the quiet dignified style in which this is written is suitable to the subject?

15 Compose a similar letter from a penguin. Try to blend information, a sympathetic attitude and a humorous comparison between human and animal life with the simplicity which makes this letter so delightful.

*16 Both Goldsmith's and Addison's styles are simple but Goldsmith is writing as a Chinese philosopher. How does he dignify both expression and subject-matter and yet allow his sense of humour full play?

C

1 Compare the letter of Ralph Crotchet with Addison's descriptions of the Tatler Court Newspapers, Coffee-house Politicians, etc. What picture does he give of eighteenth century London?^{4, 17}

2 What points in common and what points of difference do you notice between this letter and the average modern letter to the newspapers?

3 Read the rest of the De Coverley papers and explain the meaning of the reference to the widow lady and to Coverley church.⁴

4 Do you consider that this letter is a fitting climax to the De Coverley papers?⁴

5 Show how the letter form gives Addison and Steele particular opportunity of using their keen but kindly sense of humour to correct the little foibles of men.

6 Read *Evelina*. What do you imagine would be the advantages or disadvantages of the letter as a method of novel-writing?⁶

7 Compare this letter with Swift's *Journal to Stella*. What are the general characteristics of the diary form of letter?

8 Read some of the other letters in Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*,

and some of his poems What special opportunities does this device of letter writing give to Goldsmith's powers of observation and character-drawing?^{5, 8}

*9 What is the meaning of the eighteenth century term 'sensibility'? Notice how frequently it is illustrated in *Evelina* ^{6, 7}

*10 These letters are miscellaneous in subject and in style but what opportunities have the writers of all such letters that are denied to the ordinary correspondent in real life?

*11 What effect will such freedom have on the style of the letters?

III

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU AND HER TRAVELS

To her sister, the Countess of Mar

Vienna, September 14, 1716

Though I have so lately troubled you, my dear sister, with a long letter, yet I will keep my promise in giving you an account of my first going to court

In order to that ceremony, I was squeezed up in a gown, and adorned with a gorget and the other implements thereunto belonging a dress very inconvenient, but which certainly shews the neck and shape to great advantage I cannot forbear in this place giving you some description of the fashions here, which are more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason, than 'tis possible for you to imagine They build certain fabrics of gauze on their heads about a yard high, consisting of three or four storeys, fortified with numberless yards of heavy ribbon

Their hair is prodigiously powdered, and set out with three or four rows of bodkins (wonderfully large, that stick out two or three inches from their hair), made of diamonds, pearls, red, green, and yellow stones, that it certainly

requires as much art and experience to carry the load upright, as to dance upon May-day with the garland. Their whalebone petticoats outdo ours by several yards' circumference, and cover some acres of ground.

You may easily suppose how much this extraordinary dress sets off and improves the natural ugliness with which God Almighty has been pleased to endow them all generally. Even the lovely empress herself is obliged to comply, in some degree, with these absurd fashions, which they would not quit for all the world. I had a private audience (according to ceremony) of half an hour, and then all the other ladies were permitted to come and make their court. I was perfectly charmed with the empress. I cannot, however, tell you that her features are regular, her eyes are not large, but have a lively look, full of sweetness, her complexion the finest I ever saw, her nose and forehead well made, but her mouth has ten thousand charms that touch the soul. When she smiles, 'tis with a beauty and sweetness that forces adoration. She has a vast quantity of fine fair hair, but then her person!—one must speak of it poetically to do it rigid justice, all that the poets have said of the mien of Juno, the air of Venus, comes not up to the truth. The Graces move with her, the famous statue of Medici's was not formed with more delicate proportions, nothing can be added to the beauty of her neck and hands. Till I saw them, I did not believe there were any in nature so perfect, and I was almost sorry that my rank here did not permit me to kiss them, but they are kissed sufficiently, for every body that waits on her pays that homage at their entrance, and when they take leave.

When the ladies were come in, she sat down to Quinze. I could not play at a game I had never seen before, and she ordered me a seat at her right hand, and had the goodness to talk to me very much, with that grace so natural to her. I expected every moment, when the men were to come in to pay their court, but this drawing-room

is very different from that of England, no man enters it but the old grand-master, who comes in to advertise the empress of the approach of the emperor His imperial majesty did me the honour of speaking to me in a very obliging manner, but he never speaks to any of the other ladies, and the whole passes with a gravity and air of ceremony that has something very formal in it

To Mrs Thistlethwaite

Adrianople, April 1, 1717

I can now tell dear Mrs Thistlethwaite that I am safely arrived at the end of my very long journey I will not tire you with the account of the many fatigues I have suffered You would hear something of what I see here, and a letter out of Turkey that has nothing extraordinary in it, would be as great a disappointment as my visitors will receive at London if I return thither without any rarities to shew them

What shall I tell you of?—You never saw camels in your life, and, perhaps, the description of them will appear new to you I can assure you the first sight of them was very much so to me, and, though I have seen hundreds of pictures of those animals, I never saw any that was resembling enough to give a true idea of them I am going to make a bold observation, and possibly a false one, because nobody has ever made it before me, but I do take them to be of the stag kind, their legs, bodies, and necks, are exactly shaped like them, and their colour very near the same 'Tis true, they are much larger, being a great deal higher than a horse, and so swift, that, after the defeat of Peterwaradin, they far outran the swiftest horses, and brought the first news of the loss of the battle to Belgrade They are never thoroughly tamed, the drivers take care to tie them one to another with strong ropes, fifty in string, led by an ass, on which the driver rides I

have seen three hundred in one caravan They carry the third part more than any horse, but, 'tis a particular art to load them, because of the hunch on their back They seem to me very ugly creatures, their heads being ill-formed and disproportioned to their bodies They carry all the burthens, and the beasts destined to the plough are buffaloes, an animal you are also unacquainted with They are larger and more clumsy than an ox, they have short, black horns close to their heads, which grow turning backwards They say this horn looks very beautiful when 'tis well polished They are all black, with very short hair on their hides, and extremely little white eyes, that make them look like devils The country people dye their tails, and the hair of their forehead, red, by way of ornament

Horses are not put here to any laborious work, nor are they at all fit for it They are beautiful and full of spirit, but generally little, and not so strong as the breed of colder countries, very gentle, with all their vivacity, swift and sure-footed I have a little white favourite that I would not part with on any terms, he prances under me with so much fire, you would think that I had a great deal of courage to dare to mount him, yet, I'll assure you, I never rid a horse in my life so much at my command My side-saddle is the first was ever seen in this part of the world, and gazed at with as much wonder as the ship of Columbus was in America Here are some birds held in a sort of religious reverence, and, for that reason, multiply prodigiously ^{the}turtles, on the account of their innocence, and storks, because they are supposed to make every winter the pilgrimage to Mecca To say truth, they are the happiest subjects under the Turkish government, and are so sensible of their privileges, they walk the streets without fear, and generally build in the low parts of houses Happy are those that are so distinguished The vulgar Turks are perfectly persuaded that they will not be that year either attacked by fire or pestilence I have

the happiness of one of their sacred nests just under my chamber window

Now I am talking of my chamber, I remember the description of the houses here would be as new to you as any of the birds or beasts I suppose you have read, in most of our accounts of Turkey, that their houses are the most miserable pieces of building in the world I can speak very learnedly on that subject, having been in so many of them, and I assure you 'tis no such thing We are now lodging in a palace belonging to the Grand Signior I really think the manner of building here very agreeable, and proper for the country 'Tis true they are not at all solicitous to beautify the outside of their houses, and they are generally built of wood, which I own is the cause of many inconveniences, but this is not to be charged on the ill taste of the people, but the oppression of the government Every house upon the death of its master is at the Grand Signior's disposal, and, therefore, no man cares to make a great expense, which he is not sure his family will be the better for All their design is to build a house commodious, and that will last their lives, and they are very indifferent if it falls down the year after

The rooms are all spread with Persian carpets, and raised at one end of them about two feet This is the sofa, and is laid with a richer sort of carpet, and all round it a sort of couch, raised half a foot, covered with rich silk according to the fancy or magnificence of the owner Mine is of scarlet cloth, with a gold fringe, round this are placed, standing against the wall, two rows of cushions, the first very large, and the next little ones, and here the Turks display their greatest magnificence They are generally brocade, or embroidery of gold wire upon white satin,—nothing can look more gay and splendid These seats are so convenient and easy, I shall never endure chairs as long as I live The rooms are low, which I think no fault, and the ceiling is always of wood, generally inlaid or painted

and gilded They use no hangings, the rooms being all wainscoted with cedar set off with silver nails or painted with flowers, which open in many places with folding-doors, and serve for cabinets, I think, more conveniently than ours Between the windows are little arches to set pots of perfume, or baskets of flowers But what pleases me best is the fashion of having marble fountains in the lower part of the room, which throw up several spouts of water, giving at the same time an agreeable coolness, and a pleasant dashing sound, falling from one basin to another Some of these fountains are very magnificent Each house has a bagnio, which is generally two or three little rooms, leaded on the top, paved with marble, with basins, cocks of water, and all conveniences for either hot or cold baths

You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage-writers, who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know It must be under a very particular character, or on some extraordinary occasion, when a Christian is admitted into the house of a man of quality, and their *haréms* are always forbidden ground Thus they can only speak of the outside, which makes no great appearance, and the women's apartments are all built backward, removed from sight, and have no other prospect than the gardens, which are enclosed with very high walls

Large trees are planted round this place, which is the scene of their greatest pleasures, and where the ladies spend most of their hours, employed by their music or embroidery

Neither are they ignorant of a more durable manner of building their mosques are all of freestone, and the public *hanns*, or inns, extremely magnificent, many of them taking up a large square, built up round with shops under stone arches, where poor artificers are lodged *gratis* They have always a mosque joining to them, and the body of the *hann* is a most noble hall, capable of holding three

or four hundred persons, the court extremely spacious, and cloisters round it, that give it the air of our colleges I own I think these foundations a more reasonable piece of charity than the founding of convents

I think I have now told you a great deal for once If you don't like my choice of subjects, tell me what you would have me write upon, there is nobody more desirous to entertain you than, dear Mrs T,

Yours, etc

To Mr Pope

Belgrade Village, June 17, 1717

I hope before this time you have received two or three of my letters I had yours but yesterday, though dated the third of February, in which you suppose me to be dead and buried I have already let you know that I am still alive, but to say truth, I look upon my present circumstances to be exactly the same with those of departed spirits

The heats of Constantinople have driven me to this place, which perfectly answers the description of the Elysian fields I am in the middle of a wood, consisting chiefly of fruit-trees, watered by a vast number of fountains, famous for the excellency of their water, and divided into many shady walks, upon short grass, that seems to be artificial, but, I am assured, is the pure work of nature, within view of the Black Sea, from whence we perpetually enjoy the refreshment of cool breezes, that make us insensible of the heat of the summer The village is only inhabited by the richest amongst the Christians, who meet every night at a fountain, forty paces from my house, to sing and dance, the beauty and dress of the women exactly resembling the ideas of the ancient nymphs, as they are given us by the representations of the poets and painters But what persuades me more fully of my decease, is the situation of my own mind, the profound ignorance I am

in of what passes among the living (which only comes to me by chance), and the great calmness with which I receive it Yet I have still a hankering after my friends and acquaintance left in the world

To say truth, I am sometimes very weary of this singing, and dancing, and sunshine, and wish for the smoke and impertinencies in which you toil, though I endeavour to persuade myself that I live in a more agreeable variety than you do, and that Monday, setting of partridges—Tuesday, reading English—Wednesday, studying the Turkish language (in which, by the way, I am already very learned)—Thursday, classical authors—Friday, spent in writing—Saturday, at my needle—and Sunday, admitting of visits, and hearing music, is a better way of disposing the week, than Monday, at the drawing-room—Tuesday, Lady Mohun's—Wednesday, the opera—Thursday, the play—Friday, Mrs Chetwynd's, etc , a perpetual round of hearing the same scandal, and seeing the same follies acted over and over, which here affect me no more than they do other dead people I can now hear of displeasing things with pity, and without indignation The reflection on the great gulph between you and me, cools all news that comes hither I can neither be sensibly touched with joy nor grief, when I consider that possibly the cause of either is removed before the letter comes to my hands But (as I said before) this indolence does not extend to my few friendships, I am still warmly sensible of yours and Mr Congreve's, and desire to live in your remembrances, though dead to all the world beside

To the Abbé Conti

Dover, October 31, 1718

I am willing to take your word for it, that I shall really oblige you, by letting you know, as soon as possible, my safe passage over the water I arrived this morning at

Dover, after being tossed a whole night in the packet-boat, in so violent a manner, that the master, considering the weakness of his vessel, thought it prudent to remove the mail, and gave us notice of the danger. We called a little fisher boat, which could hardly make up to us, while all the people on board us were crying to Heaven, and 'tis hard to imagine one's self in a scene of greater horror than on such an occasion, and yet, shall I own it to you? though I was not at all willing to be drowned, I could not forbear being entertained at the double distress of a fellow-passenger. She was an English lady that I had met at Calais, who desired me to let her go over with me in my cabin. She had bought a fine point-head, which she was contriving to conceal from the custom-house officers. When the wind grew high, and our little vessel cracked, she fell very heartily to her prayers, and thought wholly of her soul. When it seemed to abate, she returned to the worldly care of her head-dress, and addressed herself to me.

"Dear Madam, will you take care of this point? If it should be lost!—Ah, Lord, we shall all be lost!—Lord have mercy on my soul!—Pray, Madam, take care of this head-dress."

This easy transition from her soul to her head-dress, and the alternate agonies that both gave her, made it hard to determine which she thought of greatest value. But, however, the scene was not so diverting but I was glad to get rid of it, and be thrown into the little boat, though with some hazard of breaking my neck. It brought me safe hither, and I cannot help looking with partial eyes on my native land. That partiality was certainly given us by nature, to prevent rambling, the effect of an ambitious thirst after knowledge, which we are not formed to enjoy. All we get by it is a fruitless desire of mixing the different pleasures and conveniences which are given to different parts of the world, and cannot meet in any one of them.

After having read all that is to be found in the languages I am mistress of, and having decayed my sight by midnight studies, I envy the easy peace of mind of a ruddy milkmaid, who, undisturbed by doubt, hears the sermon with humility every Sunday, having not confused the sentiments of natural duty in her head by the vain enquiries of the schools, who may be more learned, yet, after all, must remain as ignorant. And, after having seen part of Asia and Africa, and almost made the tour of Europe, I think the honest English squire more happy, who verily believes the Greek wines less delicious than March beer, that the African fruits have not so fine a flavour as golden-pippins, and the beca-figuas of Italy are not so well tasted as a rump of beef, and that, in short, there is no perfect enjoyment of this life out of Old England. I pray God I may think so for the rest of my life, and since I must be contented with our scanty allowance of daylight, that I may forget the enlivening sun of Constantinople.

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What is Lady Montagu's opinion of the dress and ceremony of the Austrian court?
- 2 For what reasons does she enjoy her first 'going to court'?
- 3 Give a description, from the details she gives here, of her first day in Adrianople.
- 4 What was the chief difficulty of property owners in Turkey?
- 5 What has she to say about horses in Turkey?
- 6 Mention the most striking details in which a Turkish room would differ from an English one.
- 7 Why is Lady Montagu in Belgrade Village convinced that she is no longer in the land of the living?
- 8 Compare the routine of a week in London with that which she gives of her week in Belgrade.
- 9 Which does she really enjoy the more—"the perpetual round of hearing the same scandal" or "the great calmness" of her life in Belgrade?
- 10 Do you think that Lady Montagu's friends in England would be satisfied with her choice of subjects?

- 11 Rewrite as vividly as you can the story of Lady Montagu's fellow-traveller on the Dover packet boat
- 12 What is Lady Montagu's idea of a perfectly contented life?
- 13 Does she show here any real love for her native country?

B

- 1 What traits of character does she reveal in her first letter? What impression does it give you of her personality?
- 2 Why does she compare the Empress of Austria with the famous statue of the Medicis?
- 3 Has Lady Montagu a just sense of her own importance? What clues does she give here to her opinion of herself?
- 4 What particularly happy touches of humour do you find in the letters from Adrianople and Belgrade Village?
- 5 What is it that makes her descriptions so picturesque?
- *6 Lady Montagu displays her talents and experience to the best advantage when she is writing to Pope. What good examples do you find in this letter of (a) her literary knowledge (b) her wit (c) her grace of style?
- 7 What is Lady Montagu's reason for being discontented with her life of travel and study?
- 8 What does she mean by the "vain enquiries of the schools, who may be more learned, yet after all must remain as ignorant?"
- 9 Do you find any example here of the sarcastic side of her wit?

C

- 1 "Their whalebone petticoats cover some acres of ground read and compare the account of the trial of the petticoat in Addison's *Court of the Tatler*. Give an account of some eighteenth century extravagances."¹⁷
- 2 Who was the Mr Congreve to whom Lady Montagu refers?
- *3 Lady Montagu later quarrelled with Pope. He used his sarcastic tongue with great bitterness against former friends but nowhere is it sharper than when it is directed against clever women whom he did not like. Exemplify this by "Atossa" in his *Characters of Women*.⁸
- 4 What examples from literature can you recall of the "honest English squire"? Complete the sketch of the type of character that Lady Montagu praises here.^{4,12,13,14,15}
- 5 Read the character of a milkmaid from the *Characters* written by Sir Thomas Overbury in the early years of the seventeenth century. Notice the points of resemblance between this and Lady Montagu's.¹⁶
- 6 What are the qualities that make Lady Montagu a good traveller?
- 7 Compare her descriptive powers with those of Dr Johnson.
- 8 What would Lady Montagu have thought of the journey from Archangel to Moscow described by Guy Miegé?²⁷

IV

DR JOHNSON THE GREATEST LONDONER OF
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield

February, 1755

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*,—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending, but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could, and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind, but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it, till I am known, and do not want it I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less, for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord, your Lordship's most humble,
Most obedient servant,

SAM JOHNSON

To Mrs Thrale

Ostich in Skie, Sept 30, 1773

Dearest Madam,

I am still confined in Skie We were unskilful travellers, and imagined that the sea was an open road which we could pass at pleasure, but we have now learned with some pain, that we may still wait for a long time the caprices of the equinoctial winds, and sit reading or writing as I now do, while the tempest is rolling the sea, or roaring in the mountains I am now no longer pleased with the delay;

you can hear from me but seldom, and I cannot at all hear from you. It comes into my mind that some evil may happen, or that I might be of use while I am away. But these thoughts are vain, the wind is violent and adverse, and our boat cannot yet come. I must content myself with writing to you, and hoping that you will sometime receive my letter.

On the third day Boswell went out with old Malcolm to see a ruined castle, which he found less entire than was promised, but he saw the country. I did not go, for the castle was perhaps ten miles off, and there is no riding at Raarsa, the whole island being rock or mountain, from which the cattle often fall and are destroyed. It is very barren, and maintains, as near as I could collect, about seven hundred inhabitants, perhaps ten to a square mile. In these countries you are not to suppose that you shall find villages or inclosures. The traveller wanders through a naked desert, gratified sometimes, but rarely, with the sight of cows, and now and then finds a heap of loose stones and turf in a cavity between rocks, where a being born with all those powers which education expands, and all those sensations which culture refines, is condemned to shelter itself from the wind and rain. Philosophers there are who try to make themselves believe that this life is happy, but they believe it only while they are saying it, and never yet produced conviction in a single mind, he, whom want of words or images sunk into silence, still thought, as he thought before, that privation of pleasure can never please, and that content is not to be much envied, when it has no other principle than ignorance of good.

We would now have gone away and left room for others to enjoy the pleasures of this little court, but the wind detained us till the 12th, when, though it was Sunday, we thought it proper to snatch the opportunity of a calm day. Raarsa accompanied us in his six-oared boat, which

he said was his coach and six It is indeed the vehicle in which the ladies take the air and pay their visits, but they have taken very little care for accommodations There is no way in or out of the boat for a woman, but by being carried, and in the boat thus dignified with a pompous name, there is no seat but an occasional bundle of straw Thus we left Raarsa, the seat of plenty, civility, and cheerfulness

We dined at a publick house at Port Re, so called because one of the Scottish kings landed there, in a progress through the western isles Raarsa paid the reckoning privately We then got on horseback, and by a short but very tedious journey came to Kingsburgh, at which the same king lodged when he landed Here I had the honour of saluting the far-famed Miss Flora Macdonald, who conducted the Prince, dressed as her maid, through the English forces from the island of Lewes, and, when she came to Skie, dined with the English officers, and left her maid below She must then have been a very young lady, she is now not old, of a pleasing person, and elegant behaviour. She told me that she thought herself honoured by my visit, and I am sure that whatever regard she bestowed on me was liberally repaid "If thou likest her opinions, thou wilt praise her virtue" She was carried to London, but dismissed without a trial, and came down with Malcolm Macleod, against whom sufficient evidence could not be procured She and her husband are poor, and are going to try their fortune in America

At Kingsburgh we were very liberally feasted, and I slept in the bed on which the Prince reposed in his distress, the sheets which he used were never put to any meaner offices, but were wrapped up by the lady of the house, and at last, according to her desire, were laid round her in her grave These are not Whigs

You remember the Doge of Genoa, who, being asked what struck him most at the French court, answered, "Myself."

I cannot think many things here more likely to affect the fancy than to see Johnson ending his sixty-fourth year in the wilderness of the Hebrides But now I am here, it will gratify me very little to return without seeing, or doing my best to see what these places afford I have a desire to instruct myself in the whole system of pastoral life, but I know not whether I shall be able to perfect the idea However, I have many pictures in my mind, which I could not have had without this journey, and should have passed it with great pleasure had you, and Master, and Queeney been in the party We should have excited the attention and enlarged the observation of each other, and obtained many pleasing topicks of future conversation As it is, I travel with my mind too much at home, and perhaps miss many things worthy of observation, or pass them with transient notice, so that the images, for want of that re-impression which discussion and comparison produce, easily fade away, but I keep a book of remarks, and Boswell writes a regular journal of our travels, which, I think, contains as much of what I say and do as of all our other occurrences together, "for such a faithful chronicler as Griffith "

I hope, dearest Madam, you are equally careful to reposit proper memorials of all that happens to you and your family, and then when we meet we shall tell our stories I wish you had gone this summer in your usual splendour to Brightelmstone

Mr Thrale probably wonders how I live all this time without sending to him for money Travelling in Scotland is dear enough, dearer in proportion to what the country affords than in England, but residence in the isles is unexpensive Company is, I think, considered as a supply of pleasure, and a relief of that tediousness of life which is felt in every place elegant or rude Of wine and punch they are very liberal, for they get them cheap, but as there is no custom-house on the island, they can hardly be con-

sidered as smugglers Their punch is made without lemons, or any substitute

Their tables are very plentiful, but a very nice man would not be pampered As they have no meat but as they kill it, they are obliged to live while it lasts upon the same flesh They kill a sheep, and set mutton boiled and roast on the table together They have fish both of the sea and of the brooks, but they can hardly conceive that it requires any sauce To sauce in general they are strangers, now and then butter is melted, but I dare not always take, lest I should offend by disliking it Barley-broath is a constant dish, and is made well in every house A stranger, if he is prudent, will secure his share, for it is not certain that he will be able to eat anything else

Their meat being often newly killed is very tough, and as nothing is sufficiently subdued by the fire, is not easily to be eaten Carving is here a very laborious employment, for the knives are never whetted Table-knives are not of long subsistence in the Highlands, every man, while arms were a regular part of dress, had his knife and fork appendant to his dirk Knives they now lay upon the table, but the handles are apt to show that they have been in other hands, and the blades have neither brightness nor edge.

Of silver there is no want, and it will last long, for it is never cleaned ✓ They are a nation just rising from barbarity, long contented with necessaries, now somewhat studious of convenience, but not yet arrived at delicate discriminations Their linen is however both clean and fine Bread, such as we mean by that name, I have never seen in the isle of Skie They have ovens, for they bake their pies, but they never ferment their meal, nor mould a loaf. Cakes of oats and barley are brought to the table, but I believe wheat is reserved for strangers They are commonly too hard for me, and therefore I take potatoes to my meat, and am sure to find them on almost every table

They retain so much of the pastoral life, that some

preparation of milk is commonly one of the dishes both at dinner and supper Tea is always drunk at the usual times, but in the morning the table is polluted with a plate of slices of strong cheese This is peculiar to the Highlands, at Edinburgh there are always honey and sweet-meats on the morning tea-table

Strong liquors they seem to love Every man, perhaps woman, begins the day with a dram, and the punch is made both at dinner and supper

They have neither wood nor coal for fuel, but burn peat or turf in their chimnies It is dug out of the moors or mosses, and makes a strong and lasting fire, not always very sweet, and somewhat apt to smoke the pot

The Highland dress, being forbidden by law, is very little used, sometimes it may be seen, but the English traveller is struck with nothing so much as the *nudité des pieds* of the common people

Skie is the greatest island, or the greatest but one, among the Hebrides Of the soil I have already given some account, it is generally barren, but some spots are not wholly unfruitful The gardens have apples and pears, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, currants, and gooseberries, but all the fruit that I have seen is small They attempt to sow nothing but oats and barley Oats constitute the bread corn of the place Their harvest is about the beginning of October, and being so late, is very much subject to disappointments from the rains that follow the equinox This year has been particularly disastrous Their rainy season lasts from autumn to spring They have seldom very hard frosts, nor was it ever known that a lake was covered with ice strong enough to bear a skater The sea round them is always open The snow falls but soon melts, only in 1771, they had a cold spring, in which the island was so long covered with it, that many beasts, both wild and domestic, perished, and the whole country was reduced to distress, from which I know not if it is even yet recovered

October 3 — The wind is now changed, and if we snatch the moment of opportunity, an escape from this island is become practicable, I have no reason to complain of my reception, yet I long to be again at home

You and my master may perhaps expect, after this description of Skie, some account of myself My eyes, I am afraid, not fully recovered, my ears are not mended, my nerves seem to grow weaker, and I have been otherwise not as well as I sometimes am, but think myself better lately This climate perhaps is not within my degree of healthy latitude

Thus I have given my most honoured mistress the story of me and my little ramble We are now going to some other isle, to what we know not, the wind will tell us

I am, etc ,

SAM JOHNSON

Compliments to Queeney, and Jack, and Lucy, and all

To Mrs Thrale

Lichfield, Oct 27, 1777.

Dear Madam,

You talk of writing and writing, as if you had all the writing to your self If our correspondence were printed, I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the authour's favourite, would say I am a good writer too. To sit down so often with nothing to say to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without any remembrance of having said, is a power of which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that every body has it

Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection, some are wise and sententious, some strain their powers for efforts of gaiety, some write news, and some write

secrets, but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret, is, doubtless, the great epistolick art

In a man's letters, you know, Madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirror of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process, nothing is inverted, nothing distorted, you see systems in their elements, you discover actions in their motives.

Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you? Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles? This is the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and everything is said as it is thought. The original idea is laid down in its simple purity, and all the supervenient conceptions are spread over it *stratum super stratum*, as they happen to be formed. These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which minds naturally in unison move each other as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest Lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched as I am touched. I have indeed concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart

I am, etc ,

SAM JOHNSON

To Mrs Boswell

July 22, 1777

Madam,

Though I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received at the arrival of your jar of marmalade arose from eating it. I received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon

this consideration I return you, dear Madam, my sincerest thanks By having your kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep, when the influence of a lady so highly and justly valued operates against him Mr Boswell will tell you, that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavoured to exalt you in his estimation You must now do the same for me We must all help one another, and you must now consider me, as, dear madam,

Your most obliged and most humble servant,
SAM JOHNSON

To Mrs Boswell

Sept 7, 1782

Dear Lady,

I have not often received so much pleasure as from your invitation to Auchinleck The journey thither and back is, indeed, too great for the latter part of the year, but if my health were fully recovered, I would suffer no little heat and cold, nor a wet or a rough road to keep me from you I am, indeed, not without hope of seeing Auchinleck again, but to make it a pleasant place I must see its lady well, and brisk, and airy For my sake, therefore, among many greater reasons, take care, dear Madam, of your health, spare no expense, and want no attendance that can procure ease, or preserve it Be very careful to keep your mind quiet, and do not think it too much to give an account of your recovery to, Madam,

Your, etc ,
SAM JOHNSON

*To a lady who asked him to obtain the Archbishop of
Canterbury's patronage to have her son sent to the University*
Madam,

I hope you will believe that my delay in answering your letter could proceed only from my unwillingness to destroy any hope that you had formed. Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world affords; but, like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain, and expectations improperly indulged must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire, expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant, an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken.

When you made your request to me, you should have considered, Madam, what you were asking. You ask me to solicit a great man to whom I never spoke, for a young person whom I had never seen, upon a supposition which I had no means of knowing to be true. There is no reason why, amongst all the great, I should chuse to supplicate the Archbishop, nor why, among all the possible objects of his bounty, the Archbishop should chuse your son. I know, Madam, how unwillingly conviction is admitted, when interest opposes it, but surely, Madam, you must allow, that there is no reason why that should be done by me, which every other man may do with equal reason, and which, indeed, no man can do properly, without some very particular relation both to the Archbishop and to you. If I could help you in this exigence by any proper means, it would give me pleasure, but this proposal is so very remote from usual methods, that I cannot comply with it but at the risk of such answer and suspicions as I believe you do not wish me to undergo.

I have seen your son this morning, he seems a pretty youth, and will, perhaps, find some better friend than I can procure him, but, though he should at last miss the University, he may still be wise, useful, and happy

I am, Madam,

Your most humble servant,

June 8, 1762

SAM JOHNSON

To Miss Jane Langton, in Rochester, Kent

My dearest Miss Jenny,

I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered, but, when I am not pretty well, I do not always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your books, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected, and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic, and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your bible. I am, my dear,

Your most humble servant,

May 10, 1784

SAM JOHNSON

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What is the cause of Johnson's indignation against Lord Chesterfield?
- 2 Why does he not welcome the praise that Chesterfield at last gives him?
- 3 On what do you think that Johnson prided himself?
- 4 Describe the country through which he is travelling?
- 5 What contrast does he find between the country and its inhabitants?
- 6 What details does he give of the home life of the people of the Hebrides?
- 7 Why does he wish for Mrs. Thrale's company?
- 8 Johnson is known to have made some slighting remarks about Scotland and the Scots. Does he seem to you to have appreciated this visit?

- 9 What according to Johnson, is the great difficulty of letter-writing?
- 10 For what reason does he think a man's letters are of great value?
- 11 Why did he write the two letters to Mrs Boswell?
- 12 Show how skilfully he softens his refusal of the invitation
- 13 For what does he blame the lady who asks him to use his influence for her? Why does he refuse his help?
- 14 What is the simple advice that he gives to Miss Jenny Langton?

B

- 1 What is the explanation of the word 'patron' in the dictionary? Compare this with Johnson's definition, and make clear the reason for his irony
- 2 What hints does Johnson give in this letter of the difficulties he has had to face?
- 3 What is there about the construction of the letter to Chesterfield that makes it both more serious and more difficult to read than those you have studied so far?
- 4 What do you know of the story of Flora Macdonald?
- 5 From what you know of them both describe more fully the scene of Dr Johnson's meeting with her
- 6 Notice the particular details that Johnson chooses to mention. What kind of feelings does natural scenery seem to arouse in him?
- 7 From Johnson's remarks here what do you gather of (a) his political sympathies (b) his feeling for the Scots?
- 8 What do these letters reveal of his friendship with Mrs Thrale?
- 9 How does Johnson divide up the different types of letters and letter-writers?
- 10 How does he show in his letter on this subject that he possesses the great epistolick art?
- 11 What do you suppose is this need for "reconciliation" between Dr Johnson and Mrs Boswell?
- 12 Notice how wide Johnson's sympathies are. How does he show his interest in the affairs of his three correspondents—Mrs Thrale, Mrs Boswell and little Jane Langton?
- 13 In the two more serious of these letters Johnson reveals two rigid principles of his life. What are they?
- 14 Can you discover what it is that makes him a contented Londoner?

C

- 1 Would you say that Johnson's description of himself as a "retired and uncourtly scholar" gives a true impression of the man?
- 2 From Boswell's account complete the story of Johnson's tour. Compare the comments which Boswell makes with Johnson's own.¹¹
- 3 Compare these letters with those of the other great men of the century—Swift and Pope. Can you discover any difference between the purposes for which these three men use the letter form?
- 4 "Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages?" Can you, from his letters form a clear impression of Johnson's personality?
- *5 Examine carefully the paragraph beginning 'Is not a patron. How does Johnson build up his sentences? Compare them with the much lighter construction of those of Lord Chesterfield.
- *6 How is the meaning of the letter to Chesterfield brought out by a study of the account in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* of Johnson's early struggles against poverty in London?¹⁰

V

LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS THE TRAIN-
ING OF A YOUNG GENTLEMAN*To his Son*

(1)

Dublin Castle, Nov 19, 1745

Dear Boy,

I have received your last Saturday's performance, with which I am very well satisfied

Now that the Christmas breaking-up draws near, I have ordered Mr Desnoyers to go to you, during that time, to teach you to dance I desire you will particularly attend to the graceful motion of your arms, which, with the manner of putting on your hat, and giving your hand, is all that a gentleman need attend to Dancing is in itself a very trifling, silly thing, but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform, and then they should be able to do it well And though I would not have you a dancer, yet when you do dance, I would have you dance well, as I would have you do everything you do well

There is no one thing so trifling, but which (if it is to be done at all) ought to be done well And I have often told you, that I wished you even played at pitch, and cricket, better than any boy at Westminster ✓For instance, dress is a very foolish thing, and yet it is a very foolish thing for a man not to be well dressed, according to his rank and way of life, and it is so far from being a disparagement to any man's understanding, that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those whom he lives with the difference in this case, between a man of sense and a fop,

is, that the fop values himself upon his dress, and the man of sense laughs at it, at the same time that he knows he must not neglect it. There are a thousand foolish customs of this kind, which not being criminal must be complied with, and even cheerfully, by men of sense. ✓ Diogenes the Cynic was a wise man for despising them, but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can, but do not tell them so.

It is a very fortunate thing for Sir Charles Hotham to have fallen into the hands of one of your age, experience, and knowledge of the world, I am persuaded you will take infinite care of him. Good night.

(11)

Bath, March 9, 1748

Dear Boy,

I must, from time to time, remind you of what I have often recommended to you, and of what you cannot attend to too much, *sacrifice to the Graces*. The different effects of the same things, said or done, when accompanied or abandoned by them, is almost inconceivable. They prepare the way to the heart, and the heart has such an influence over the understanding, that it is worth while to engage it in our interest.

From your own observation, reflect what a disagreeable impression an awkward address, a slovenly figure, an ungraceful manner of speaking, whether stuttering, muttering, monotony, or drawing, an unattentive behaviour, etc., make upon you, at first sight, in a stranger, and how they prejudice you against him, though, for aught you know, he may have great intrinsic sense and merit. And reflect, on the other hand, how much the opposites of all these things prepossess you, at first sight, in favour of those who enjoy them. You wish to find all good qualities in them, and are in some degree disappointed if you do not. A thousand little things, not separately to be defined,

conspire to form these Graces, this *je ne sais quoi*, that always pleases A pretty person, genteel motions, a proper degree of dress, an harmonious voice, something open and cheerful in the countenance, but without laughing, a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking all these things, and many others, are necessary ingredients in the composition of the pleasing *je ne sais quoi*, which everybody feels, though nobody can describe) Observe carefully, then, what displeases or pleases you in others, and be persuaded that in general the same things will please or }displease them in you

Having mentioned laughing, I must particularly warn you against it and I could heartily wish, that you may often be seen to smile, but never heard to laugh, while you live Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill-manners it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy, at silly things, and they call it being merry ✓In my mind, there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter True wit, or sense, never yet made anybody laugh, they are above it they please the mind, and give a cheerfulness to the countenance But it is low buffoonery, or silly accidents, that always excite laughter, and that is what people of sense and breeding should show themselves above A man's going to sit down, in the supposition that he has a chair behind him, and falling down for want of one, sets a whole company a laughing, when all the wit in the world would not do it, a plain proof, in my mind, how low and unbecoming a thing laughter is Not to mention the disagreeable noise that it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions \ Laughter is easily restrained by a very little reflection, but as it is generally connected with the idea of gaiety, people do not enough attend to its absurdity I am neither of a melancholy, nor a cynical disposition, and am as willing and as apt to be pleased as anybody, but I am sure that, since I have had the full use of my reason,

nobody has ever heard me laugh Many people, at first from awkwardness and *mauvaise honte*, have got a very disagreeable and silly trick of laughing whenever they speak and I know a man of very good parts, Mr Waller, who cannot say the commonest thing without laughing, which makes those who do not know him, take him at first for a natural fool

(iii)

London, September 27, 1749

Dear Boy,

A vulgar, ordinary way of thinking, acting, or speaking, implies a low education, and a habit of low company Young people contract it at school, or among servants, with whom they are too often used to converse, but, after they frequent good company, they must want attention and observation very much, if they do not lay it quite aside And indeed if they do not, good company will be very apt to lay them aside The various kinds of vulgarisms are infinite, I cannot pretend to point them out to you, but I will give some samples, by which you may guess at the rest

✓A vulgar man is captious and jealous, eager and impetuous about trifles He suspects himself to be slighted, thinks everything that is said meant at him, if the company happens to laugh, he is persuaded they laugh at him, he grows angry and testy, says something very impertinent, and draws himself into a scrape, by showing what he calls a proper spirit, and asserting himself A man of fashion does not suppose himself to be either the sole or principal object of the thoughts, looks, or words of the company, and never suspects that he is either slighted or laughed at, unless he is conscious that he deserves it And if (which very seldom happens) the company is absurd or ill-bred enough to do either, he does not care twopence, unless the

insult to be so gross and plain as to require satisfaction of another kind * As he is above trifles, he is never vehement and eager about them, and wherever they are concerned, rather acquiesces than wrangles A vulgar man's conversation always savours strongly of the lowness of his education and company It turns chiefly upon his domestic affairs, his servants, the excellent order he keeps in his family, and the little anecdotes of the neighbourhood, all which he relates with emphasis, as interesting matters He is a man gossip

Vulgarism in language is the next and distinguishing characteristic of bad company and a bad education A man of fashion avoids nothing with more care than that Proverbial expressions and trite sayings are the flowers of the rhetoric of a vulgar man Would he say that men differ in their tastes, he both supports and adorns that opinion, by the good old saying, as he respectfully calls it, that *what is one man's Meat is another man's Poison* If anybody attempts being *smart*, as he calls it, upon him, he gives them *Tut for tat*, ay, that he does He has always some favourite word for the time being, which, for the sake of using often, he commonly abuses Such as *vastly* angry, *vastly* kind, *vastly* handsome, and *vastly* ugly Even his pronunciation of proper words carries the mark of the beast along with it He calls the earth *yearth*, he is *obliged* not obliged to you He goes *to wards*, and not towards such a place He sometimes affects hard words, by way of ornament, which he always mangles like a learned woman A man of fashion never has recourse to proverbs and vulgar aphorisms, uses neither favourite words nor hard words, but takes great care to speak very correctly and grammatically, and to pronounce properly that is, according to the usage of the best companies

An awkward address, ungraceful attitudes and actions, and a certain left-handedness (if I may use that word), loudly proclaim low education and low company, for it is

impossible to suppose that a man can have frequented good company, without having caught something, at least, of their air and motions. A new raised man is distinguished in a regiment by his awkwardness, but he must be impenetrably dull if, in a month or two's time, he cannot perform at least the common manual exercise, and look like a soldier. The very accoutrements of a man of fashion are grievous encumbrances to a vulgar man. He is at a loss what to do with his hat, when it is not upon his head, his cane (if unfortunately he wears one) is at perpetual war with every cup of tea or coffee he drinks, destroys them first, and then accompanies them in their fall. His sword is formidable only to his own legs, which would possibly carry him fast enough out of the way of any sword but his own. His clothes fit him so ill, and constrain him so much, that he seems rather their prisoner than their proprietor. He presents himself in company like a criminal in a court of justice, his very air condemns him, and people of fashion will no more connect themselves with the one, than people of character will with the other. This repulse drives and sinks him into low company, a gulf from whence no man, after a certain age, ever emerged.

To Mrs Godson

London, July 28, 1761

Dear Godson,

I was agreeably surprised with receiving your letter written all with your own hand, which at five years and a half is, upon my word, a great performance. What will not that Herculean hand of yours so red and so blue do in time, that can do so much already? Seriously, I see that you have been a very good boy, and have applied yourself to your book, for I take it for granted that your reading keeps pace at least with your writing. I do not know if you remember (but I am apt to think you do) that I promised to send you a watch for the first letter you should write to

me with your own hand Now as a Man of Honour performs whatever he has promised, even without being put in mind of it, I have bought you a watch which I will send you by the first opportunity It is not, as you will find, a very costly one, but perhaps it may answer your present purposes as well as a better You may, and I suppose will, set it and wind it up ten times a day, and if you drop it upon the Forest it will be no great loss You shall have one much better when you can talk and write French currently, and for every considerable improvement, I will give you something still much better So that it will be your interest to take pains ✓Study heartily, and play vigorously, but always do one or the other, and never be idle I hope you play often with the pictures upon your Globe, and ask your Papa a thousand questions about them, for they are as like as ever they can stare, to England, France, Spain, Italy, and every other Country in the world You have likewise the pictures in Ovid's Metamorphoses to play with for variety There you will find Jupiter with his Eagle and his thunderbolt, Juno with a fine tame Peacock, Venus with a pair of very pretty turtle Doves, and Diana who carries half the Moon upon her head, and a bow and arrow in her hand If I were you, I would ask Papa several questions about those people, as who they are, and what is their business

↓ *Bon soir petit Drôle, et aimez moy, car je vous aime beaucoup* Adieu

CHESTERFIELD

This last line is for you, and your first Minister Jack, to lay your heads together about

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What is Chesterfield's reason for wishing his son to do trifling things well?
- 2 What does a man of sense think about dress and how is this different from the way in which a fop considers it?
- 3 What are the things that most impress you in a stranger?
- 4 Why does Chesterfield warn his son against laughter?
- 5 What is it that most excites loud laughter and what is the effect of true wit?
- 6 How can you distinguish a vulgar man in a company?
- 7 What is the correct attitude of a man of fashion towards his acquaintances?
- 8 What are the 'trite sayings' that a vulgar man is so fond of?
- 9 What does Chesterfield mean by favourite words? Give his example and add to it some popular words carelessly used now-a-days
- 10 In what ways does a "vulgar man" show his awkwardness?
- 11 What lesson does Chesterfield bring home to his godson by sending him the watch?

B

- 1 Of what value according to Chesterfield are trifling things? Is he right in considering them so important?
- 2 What does Chesterfield mean by the *je ne sais quoi* that always pleases?
- 3 Is he in any way right when he decides that laughter is always "low and unbecoming"?
- 4 Does he among all these graces mention any points of character or is he merely as Johnson says teaching the 'manners of a dancing-master'?
- 5 Is Chesterfield's attitude that of a snob—that is, does he show contempt for the man who has no opportunities of being a "man of fashion"?
- 6 From your own experience, but keeping in mind Chesterfield's opinion on the importance of the subject write a composition on First Impressions.
- 7 Which of the details that are mentioned here are now out-of-date? Can you replace them by more modern ones?
- 8 What does Chesterfield mean by that Herculean hand of yours?
- 9 Why does he insist on his godson's learning French as soon as possible?

C

- 1 Consider Sir Andrew Aguecheek as an example of what Chesterfield means by a fop.¹⁸
- 2 Can you give examples of modern words mispronounced by people who are anxious to give a good impression of their breeding? What is our opinion of this affectation now-a-days?
- 3 Such vulgarisms as are described here have often been laughed at on the stage. Who is the famous learned lady who mangles hard words?¹⁹
- *4 Compare the portrait of a gentleman which Chesterfield has in his mind with that which Cardinal Newman draws in his *Idea of a University*.²⁰
- *5 Compare the elaboration of eighteenth century life with the freedom and simplicity of modern standards. Can you account for the difference?

VI

POLITE SOCIETY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

(a) SOCIAL GATHERINGS

From Mrs ELIZABETH MONTAGU

(1)

December, 1781

To-morrow I am to go into the city to choose some lamps for my hall I hope by the end of the week the wishes of my housekeeper, the caprices of my laundry maid, the fancies of my housemaids, the demands of my cook, and the accomodations of my Butler, will all be fulfilled, compleated, and answered, and I assure you they make a total of no small significance A Betty Tulls working apparatus is but a feather on the camel's back, yet it adds to the load, tho' I have not denied requests I have endeavoured to stop complaints, for I find if I did not discourage them I should be plagued to death, for servants love to give significance to trifles

(11)

From Sandleford, her country house

1782

Our party consists of the fair Gregory, my nephew Montagu, his tutor, and your humble servant If the weather is fine the young men take a ride in the morning, and about noon return to their Studies Mademoiselle Gregory drives me in a whiskey "over the hills and far away" We return before dinner long enough for the business of the toilette, and an hour of reading for the young

lady, and the domestic regulations of Madame, and supervising the workwomen who are employed in a prodigious undertaking of embroidery in feathers, at four o'clock we sit down together to dinner with the good appetite, good spirits, and good humour which fresh air, moderate exercise and excursions through the beautiful scenes of nature at this fine season of the year must naturally create, to this succeeds our pot of coffee, not laced with politics, then tea is brought, but with it comes not scandal, tittle tattle, or calumny of any sort We saunter together till within an hour of sunset, then I retire to my dressing room, the young folks still walk till nearly nine, they repair to their studies till 10, then comes supper mirth and laughter I take my little supper in my dressing room, by which I get some leisure time, and leave my young people to indulge that innocent gaiety of conversation so becoming their time of life

(III)

June, 1791

I had hoped this morning to have had leisure to send you a full and true account of my various engagements, but I have been obliged to give up my morning first to paying my tradesmen's bills, then to doing the honours of my feather work to about 50 people The news paper would tell you all that is worth hearing about my breakfast on Monday The honour and the delight I received by her Majestys and the Princesses visit, no pen can describe, no paper contain All that a great mind, and benevolent heart can inspire appears in every word the Queen speaks, and every look and gesture can express The Princesses are beyond all description charming The joy of the day I have lived on ever since then the fatigue etc of the succeeding days have not subdued my health and spirits

(b) THE LETTERS OF A LADY-IN-WAITING

From FANNY BURNEY

(1)

To Mrs Burney

Windsor, Dec 17, 1785

My Dearest Hetty,

I am sorry I could not more immediately write, but really I have not had a moment since your last

Now I know what your next want is, to hear accounts of Kings, Queens, and such royal personages Oh ho! do you so? Well

Shall I tell you a few matters of fact?—or had you rather a few matters of etiquette? Oh, matters of etiquette, you cry! for matters of fact are short and stupid, and anybody can tell, and everybody is tired with them

Very well, take your own choice

To begin, then, with the beginning

You know I told you, in my last, my various difficulties, what sort of preferment to turn my thoughts to, and concluded with just starting a young budding notion of decision, by suggesting that a handsome pension for nothing at all would be as well as working night and day for a salary

This blossom of an idea, the more I dwelt upon, the more I liked Thinking served it for a hot-house, and it came out into full blow as I ruminated upon my pillow Delighted that thus all my contradictory and wayward fancies were overcome, and my mind was peaceably settled what to wish and to demand, I gave over all further meditation upon choice of elevation, and had nothing more to do but to make my election known

My next business, therefore, was to be presented This could be no difficulty, my coming hither had been their own desire, and they had earnestly pressed its execution I had only to prepare myself for the rencounter

You would never believe—you, who, distant from courts and courtiers, know nothing of their ways,—the many things to be studied, for appearing with a proper propriety before crowned heads. Heads without crowns are quite other sort of rotundas.

Now then to the etiquette. I inquired into every particular, that no error might be committed. And as there is no saying what may happen in this mortal life, I shall give you those instructions I have received myself, that, should you find yourself in the royal presence, you may know how to comport yourself.

Directions for coughing, sneezing, or moving, before the King and Queen

In the first place, you must not cough. If you find a cough tickling in your throat, you must arrest it from making any sound, if you find yourself choking with the forbearance, you must choke—but not cough.

In the second place, you must not sneeze. If you have a vehement cold, you must take no notice of it, if your nose-membranes feel a great irritation, you must hold your breath, if a sneeze still insists upon making its way, you must oppose it, by keeping your teeth grinding together, if the violence of the repulse breaks some blood-vessel, you must break the blood-vessel—but not sneeze.

In the third place, you must not, upon any account, stir either hand or foot. If, by chance, a black pin runs into your head, you must not take it out. If the pain is very great, you must be sure to bear it without wincing, if it brings the tears into your eyes, you must not wipe them off, if they give you a tingling by running down your cheeks, you must look as if nothing was the matter. If the blood should gush from your head by means of the black pin, you must let it gush, if you are uneasy to think of making such a blurred appearance, you must be uneasy, but you

must say nothing about it. If, however, the agony is very great, you may, privately, bite the inside of your cheek, or of your lips, for a little relief, taking care, meanwhile, to do it so cautiously as to make no apparent dent outwardly. And, with that precaution, if you even gnaw a piece out, it will not be minded, only be sure either to swallow it, or commit it to a corner of the inside of your mouth till they are gone—for you must not spit.

I have many other directions, but no more paper, I will endeavour, however, to have them ready for you in time. Perhaps, meanwhile, you will be glad to know if I have myself had opportunity to put in practice these receipts?

How can I answer in this little space? My love to Mr B and the little ones, and remember me kindly to cousin Edward, and believe me, my dearest Esther, most affectionately yours,

F B

(11)

To Dr Burney

Gloucester House, Weymouth, July 13, 1789

My dearest Padre's kind letter was most truly welcome to me. When I am so distant, the term of absence or of silence seems always doubly long to me.

The bay here is most beautiful, the sea never rough, generally calm and gentle, and the sands perfectly smooth and pleasant. I have not yet bathed, for I have had a cold in my head, which I caught at Lyndhurst, and which makes me fear beginning, but I have hopes to be well enough to-morrow, and thenceforward to ail nothing more. It is my intention to cast away all superfluous complaints into the main ocean, which I think quite sufficiently capacious to hold them, and really my little frame will

find enough to carry and manage without them

His Majesty is in delightful health, and much-improved spirits All agree he never looked better The loyalty of all this place is excessive, they have dressed out every street with labels of "God save the King" all the shops have it over the doors, all the children wear it in their caps, all the labourers in their hats, and all the sailors *in their voices*, for they never approach the house without shouting it aloud, nor see the King, or his shadow, without beginning to huzza, and going on to three cheers The bathing-machines make it their motto over all their windows, and those bathers that belong to the royal dippers wear it in bandeaus on their bonnets, to go into the sea, and have it again, in large letters, round their waists, to encounter the waves Flannel dresses, tucked up, and no shoes nor stockings, with bandeaus and girdles, have a most singular appearance, and when first I surveyed these loyal nymphs it was with some difficulty I kept my features in order

Nor is this all Think but of the surprise of His Majesty when, the first time of his bathing, he had no sooner popped his royal head under water than a band of music, concealed in a neighbouring machine, struck up "God save great George our King"

One thing, however, was a little unlucky,—when the Mayor and burgesses came with the address, they requested leave to kiss hands this was graciously accorded, but the Mayor advancing, in a common way, *to take the Queen's hand*, as he might that of any lady mayoress, Colonel Gwynn, who stood by, whispered, "You must kneel, sir!" He found, however, that he took no notice of this hint, but kissed the Queen's hand erect As he passed him, in his way back, the Colonel said, "You should have knelt, sir!"

"Sir," answered the poor Mayor, "I cannot"

"Everybody does, sir"

"Sir,—I have a wooden leg!"

Poor man! 'twas such a surprise! and such an excuse as no one could dispute

But the absurdity of the matter followed,—all the rest did the same, taking the same privilege, by the example, without the same or any cause!

There is almost no general company here, as the proper season does not begin till autumn, but the party attendant on the King and Queen is large, and the principal people of the county,—Lord Digby, Admiral Digby, Mr Pitt Damer, Lord Milton, Mr Rolle, etc etc—all are coming to and fro continually Our home party is just the same as it began

A thousand thanks for your home news I am, most dear sir,

Affectionately and dutifully, your

F B

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What is the chief trial of Mrs Montagu's household?
- 2 Describe the day in her country house
- 3 Compare Mrs Montagu's town life with her country life In which do you think she takes the greater delight, and for which would she be the better fitted?
- 4 Why does Fanny Burney decide to talk about matters of etiquette?
- 5 Describe the behaviour that she says is so necessary in the presence of Royalty
- 6 What is her opinion of Weymouth?
- 7 How did the town welcome the king?
- 8 Tell the story of the mayor who would not kneel to kiss the Queen's hand

B

- 1 Wherein does the charm of Mrs Montagu's letter-writing lie? Would she be likely to be a good talker?
- 2 What traces do you find here of the practical side of the eighteenth century woman, and what signs of the 'learned lady'?
- 3 What would be Fanny Burney's duties as lady-in-waiting?
- 4 What does she really think of the manners of the court? How far is she criticising them?
- 5 Compare the amount of ceremony in force at this eighteenth century court with the amount that royalty now demands
- 6 Do you suppose that Fanny Burney had actually "put in practice these receipts"? Show how exaggeration is sometimes the most delightful quality of humour

7 Compare these letters with Swift's gossip. What differences do you notice between (a) the temperaments (b) the styles of the two writers?

8 It was said of Fanny Burney that 'everything wove itself into a picture before her eyes'. What signs of this do you see in these letters?

9 What do you imagine were the qualities that made her so good a novelist?

C

1 Compare the routine of an eighteenth century day with that of a modern. Show how a day in one of Dickens' novels lies midway between the two.

*2 Look up Mrs Montagu and Fanny Burney in the index to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Show his opinion of both and his interest in the literary ladies of the time.

*3 Considering *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Goldsmith's letters and *Evelina*, compare the qualities of a good letter-writer and those of a novelist.^{18, 21}

4 Fanny Burney was known among her friends and admirers as the 'little character monger'. Johnson said she would make a successful spy. What is it besides these powers that gives charm to her letters?

5 Was Walpole right in praising women as far better letter writers than men?

6 Compare with Fanny Burney's account of the royal bath that in Thomas Hardy's *Trumpet Major*.²²

VII

THE WIT OF TWO FRIENDS GRAY AND WALPOLE

From GRAY to his mother

(1)

Lyons, October 13, 1739

It is now almost five weeks since I left Dijon, one of the gayest and most agreeable little cities of France, for Lyons, its reverse in all these particulars. It is the second in the kingdom in bigness and rank, the streets excessively narrow and nasty, the houses immensely high and large, (that, for instance, where we are lodged, has twenty-five rooms on a floor, and that for five storeys) it swarms with

inhabitants like Paris itself, but chiefly a mercantile people, too much given up to commerce to think of their own, much less a stranger's, diversions We have no acquaintance in the town, but such English as happen to be passing through here, on their way to Italy and the South, which at present happen to be near thirty in number

It is a fortnight since we set out from hence upon a little excursion to Geneva We took the longest road, which lies through Savoy, on purpose to see a famous monastery, called the grand Chartreuse, and had no reason to think our time lost After having travelled seven days very slow (for we did not change horses, it being impossible for a chaise to go post in these roads) we arrived at a little village, among the mountains of Savoy, called Echelles, from thence we proceeded on horses, who are used to the way, to the mountain of the Chartreuse It is six miles to the top, the road runs winding up it, commonly not six feet broad, on one hand is the rock, with woods of pine-trees hanging over head, on the other, a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent, that sometimes tumbling among the fragments of stone that have fallen from on high, and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is still made greater by the echo from the mountains on each side, concurs to form one of the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld Add to this the strange views made by the craggs and cliffs on the other hand, the cascades that in many places throw themselves from the very summit down into the vale, and the river below, and many other particulars impossible to describe, you will conclude we had no occasion to repent our pains

This place St Bruno chose to retire to, and upon its very top founded the aforesaid Convent, which is the superior of the whole order When we came there, the two fathers, who are commissioned to entertain strangers, (for the rest

must neither speak one to another, nor to any one else received us very kindly, and set before us a repast of dried fish, eggs, butter, and fruits, all excellent in their kind, and extremely neat. They pressed us to spend the night there, and to stay some days with them, but this we could not do, so they led us about their house, which is, you must think, like a little city, for there are 100 fathers, beside 300 servants, that make their clothes, grind their corn, press their wine, and do everything among themselves. The whole is quite orderly and simple, nothing of finery, but the wonderful decency, and the strange situation, more than supply the place of it. In the evening we descended by the same way, passing through many clouds that were then forming themselves on the mountain's side.

Next day we continued our journey by Chamberry, which, though the chief city of the Duchy, and residence of the king of Sardinia, when he comes into this part of his dominions, makes but a very mean and insignificant appearance, we lay at Aix, once famous for its hot baths, and the next night at Annecy. The day after, by noon, we got to Geneva. I have not time to say anything about it, nor of our solitary journey back again.

(11)

Turin, November 7, 1739

I am this night arrived here, and just set down to rest me after eight days tiresome journey. For the three first we had the same road we before past through to go to Geneva, the fourth we turned out of it, and for that day and the next travelled rather among than upon the Alps, the way commonly running through a deep valley by the side of the river Arc, which works itself a passage, with great difficulty and a mighty noise, among vast quantities of rocks, that have rolled down from the mountain tops.

The winter was so far advanced, as in great measure to spoil the beauty of the prospect, however, there was still somewhat fine remaining amidst the savageness and horreur of the place. The sixth we began to go up several of these mountains, and as we were passing one, met with an accident odd enough. Mr Walpole had a little fat black spaniel, that he was very fond of, that he sometimes used to set down, and let it run by the chaise side. We were at that time in a very rough road, not two yards broad at most, on one side was a great wood of pines, and on the other a vast precipice, it was noon-day, and the sun shone bright, when all of a sudden, from the wood-side, (which was as steep upwards as the other part was downwards) out rushed a great wolf, came close to the head of the horses, seized the dog by the throat, and rushed up the hill again with him in his mouth. This was done in less than a quarter of a minute, we all saw it, and yet the servants had not time to draw their pistols, or do anything to save the dog. If he had not been there, and the creature had thought fit to lay hold of one of the horses, chaise, and we, and all must inevitably have tumbled about fifty fathoms perpendicular down the precipice.

The seventh we came to Lanebourg, the last town in Savoy, it lies at the foot of the famous mount Cenis, which is so situated as to allow no room for any way but over the very top of it. Here the chaise was forced to be pulled to pieces, and the baggage and that to be carried by mules. We ourselves were wrapped up in our furs, and seated upon a sort of matted chair without legs, which is carried upon poles in the manner of a bier, and so began to ascend by the help of eight men.

It was six miles to the top, where a plain opens itself about as many more in breadth, covered perpetually with very deep snow, and in the midst of that a great lake of unfathomable depth, from whence a river takes its rise, and tumbles over monstrous rocks quite down the other

side of the mountain The descent is six miles more, but infinitely more steep than the going up, and here the men perfectly fly down with you, stepping from stone to stone with incredible swiftness in places where none but they could go three paces without falling The immensity of the precipices, the roaring of the river and torrents that run into it, the huge craggs covered with ice and snow, and the clouds below you and about you, are objects it is impossible to conceive without seeing them, and though we have heard many strange descriptions of the scene, none of them at all came up to it

We shall stay here, I believe, a fortnight, and proceed for Genoa, which is three or four days journey to go post

From GRAY to Horace Walpole

Burnham, August, 1736

I was hindered in my last, and so could not give you all the trouble I would have done The description of a road which your coach wheels have so often honoured, it would be needless to give you, suffice it that I arrived safe at my Uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination, his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing, and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt

My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices, mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover cliff, but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to

climb, and craggs that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds,

And as they bow their hoary tops relate,
In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of fate,
While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf, and swarm on every bough

At the foot of one of these squats I, (*Il penseroso*) and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise, before he had an Eve, but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too, that is talk to you, but I do not remember that I ever heard you answer me I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault

I shall be in Town in about three weeks Adieu

From HORACE WALPOLE to Richard West

From Florence, Nov , 1740.

Child, I am going to let you see your shocking proceedings with us On my conscience, I believe 'tis three months since you wrote to either Gray or me If you had been ill, Ashton would have said so, and if you had been dead, the gazettes would have said it If you had been angry, —but that's impossible, how can one quarrel with folks three thousand miles off? We are neither divines nor commentators, and consequently have not hated you on paper 'Tis to show that my charity for you cannot be interrupted at this distance, that I write to you, though I have nothing to say, for 'tis a bad time for small news,

and when emperors and czarinas are dying all up and down Europe, one can't pretend to tell you of anything that happens within our sphere Not but that we have our accidents too If you have had a great wind in England, we have had a great water at Florence We have been trying to set out every day, and pop upon you It is fortunate that we staid, for I don't know what had become of us! Yesterday, with violent rains, there came flouncing down from the mountains such a flood, that it floated the whole city The jewellers on the Old Bridge removed their commodities, and in two hours after the bridge was cracked The torrent broke down the quays, and drowned several coach-horses, which are kept here in stables underground We were moated into our house all day, which is near the Arno, and had the miserable spectacles of the ruins that were washed along with the hurricane There was a cart with two oxen not quite dead, and four men in it drowned but what was ridiculous, there came tiding along a fat hay-cock, with a hen and her eggs, and a cat The torrent is considerably abated, but we expect terrible news from the country, especially from Pisa, which stands so much lower and nearer the sea There is a stone here, which when the water overflows, Pisa is entirely flooded The water rose two ells yesterday above that stone Judge!

For this last month we have passed our time but dully, all diversions silenced on the emperor's death, and everybody out of town Then I am got into a horrid lazy way of a morning I don't believe I should know seven o'clock in the morning again, if I was to see it But I am returning to England, and shall grow very solemn and wise! Are you wise? Dear West, have pity on one, who has done nothing of gravity for these two years, and do laugh sometimes We do nothing else, and have contracted such formidable ideas of the good people of England, that we are already nourishing great black eyebrows, and great

black beards, and teasing our countenances into wrinkles Then for the common talk of the times we are quite at a loss, and for the dress You would oblige us extremely by forwarding to us the votes of the houses, the king's speech, and the magazines, or if you had any such thing as a little book called the Foreigner's Guide through the City of London and the liberties of Westminster, or a letter to a Freeholder, or the Political Companion then 'twould be an infinite obligation if you would neatly band-box-up a baby dressed after the newest Temple fashion now in use at both play-houses Alack-a-day! We shall just arrive in the tempest of elections!

As our departure depends entirely upon the weather, we cannot tell you to a day when we shall say, Dear West, how glad I am to see you! and all the many questions and answers that we shall give and take Would the day were come! Do but figure to yourself the journey we are to pass through first! But you can't conceive Alps, Apennines, Italian inns and post chaises I tremble at the thoughts They were just sufferable while new and unknown, and as we met them by the way in coming to Florence, Rome and Naples, but they are passed, and the mountains remain! Well, write to one in the interim, direct to me addressed to Monsieur Selwyn, *chez monsieur Alexandre, rue St Apolline, à Paris* If Mr Alexandre is not there, the street is, and I believe that will be sufficient Adieu, my dear child!

Yours ever,

HOR WALPOLE

From HORACE WALPOLE to Horace Mann

Newmarket, October 3, 1743.

I am writing to you in an inn on the road to London What a paradise should I have thought this when I was in the Italian inns! in a wide barn with four ample win-

dows, which had nothing more like glass than shutters and iron bars! no tester to the bed, and the saddles and portmanteaus heaped on me to keep off the cold What a paradise did I think the inn at Dover when I came back! and what magnificence were twopenny prints, salt-cellars, and boxes to hold the knives, but the *summum bonum* was small-beer and the newspaper

"I bless'd my stars, and call'd it luxury!"

Who was the Neapolitan ambassadress that could not live at Paris, because there was no maccaroni? Now I am relapsed into all the dissatisfied repinement of a true English grumbling voluptuary How dismal, how solitary, how scrub does this town look, and yet it has actually a street of houses better than Parma or Modena Nay, the houses of the people of fashion, who come hither for the races, are palaces to what houses in London itself were fifteen years ago People do begin to live again now, and I suppose in a term we shall revert to York Houses, Clarendon Houses, etc But from that grandeur all the nobility had contracted themselves to live in coops of a dining-room, a dark back-room, with one eye in a corner, and a closet Think what London would be, if the chief houses were in it, as in the cities in other countries, and not dispersed like great rarity-plums in a vast pudding of country Well, it is a tolerable place as it is! Were I a physician, I would prescribe nothing but recipe, CCCLXV drachm Londin Would you know why I like London so much? Why, if the world must consist of so many fools as it does, I choose to take them in the gross, and not made into separate pills, as they are prepared in the country Besides, there is no being alone but in a metropolis the worst place in the world to find solitude is the country questions grow there, and that unpleasant Christian commodity, neighbours Oh! they are all good Samaritans, and do so pour balms and nostrums upon one, if one has but the toothache, or a journey to take, that they break

one's head A journey to take—ay! they talk over the miles to you, and tell you, you will be late in My Lord Lovel says, *John* always goes two hours in the dark in the morning, to avoid being one hour in the dark in the evening I was pressed to set out to-day before seven I did before nine, and here am I arrived at a quarter past five, for the rest of the night

I am more convinced every day, that there is not only no knowledge of the world out of a great city, but no decency, no practicable society—I had almost said, not a virtue

From HORACE WALPOLE to Richard Bentley

(1)

Arlington Street, Feb 23, 1755

I am at present confined with a cold, which I caught by going to a fire in the middle of the night, and in the middle of the snow, two days ago About five in the morning, Harry waked me with a candle in his hand, and cried, "Pray, your honour, don't be frightened!"—"No, Harry, I am not but what is it that I am not to be frightened at?"—"There is a great fire here in St James's Street"—I rose, and indeed thought all St James's Street was on fire, but it proved in Bury Street However, you know I can't resist going to a fire, for it is certainly the only horrid sight that is fine I slipped on my slippers, and an embroidered suit that hung on the chair, and ran to Bury Street, and stepped into a pipe that was broken up for water—It would have made a picture—the horror of the flames, the snow, the day breaking with difficulty through so foul a night, and my figure, party per *pale*, mud and gold It put me in mind of Lady Margaret Herbert's providence, who asked somebody for a *pretty* pattern for a nightcap "Lord!" said they, "what signifies the pattern of a nightcap?"—"Oh! child," said she, "but you know, in case of fire" There were two houses burnt, and a poor

maid, and an officer jumped out of window, and is much hurt, and two young beauties were conveyed out the same way in their shifts. There have been two more great fires Alderman Belchier's house at Epsom, that belonged to the Prince, is burnt, and Beckford's fine house in the country, with pictures and furniture to a great value. He says, "Oh! I have an odd fifty thousand pounds in a drawer I will build it up again, it won't be above a thousand pound apiece difference to my thirty children." Adieu!

Yours ever,

HOR WALPOLE

(11)

Strawberry hill, Wednesday, June 11, 1755

I was prevented from finishing my letter yesterday, by what do you think? By no less magnificent a circumstance than a deluge. We have had an extraordinary drought, no grass, no leaves, no flowers, not a white rose for the festival of yesterday! About four arrived such a flood, that we could not see out of the windows. the whole lawn was a lake, though situated on so high an Ararat. presently it broke through the leads, drowned the pretty blue bed-chamber, passed through ceilings and floors into the little parlour, terrified Harry, and opened all Catherine's water gates and speech-gates. I had but just time to collect two dogs, a couple of sheep, a pair of bantams, and a brace of gold-fish, for, in the haste of my zeal to imitate my ancestor Noah, I forgot that fish would not easily be drowned. In short, if you chance to spy a little ark with pinnacles sailing towards Jersey, open the skylight, and you will find some of your acquaintance. You never saw such desolation! A pigeon brings word that Mabland has fared still worse. it never came into my head before, that a rainbow-office for insuring against water might be very

¹ The Pretender's birthday

necessary This is a true account of the late deluge.

Witness our hands

Horace Noah
Catherine Noah, her x mark
Henry Shem
Louis Japhet
Peter Ham, etc

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 Describe Gray's visit to the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse
- 2 What is it that impresses him about the place?
- 3 What was the fate of Walpole's little dog? Describe the incident
- 4 How did they cross Mont Cenis?
- 5 What picture can you give of the scenery through which they were passing?
- 6 What impression does Gray give of his uncle?
- 7 Gray's favourite 'forest' is the famous Burnham Beeches. How does he describe it?
- 8 How does he talk of the trees?
- 9 What are his particular reasons for liking the place?
- 10 Why is it necessary for Gray to take all the conversation to himself?
- 11 Describe more fully the scene that Walpole and Gray looked out on from their house near the Arno
- 12 What are the disadvantages of being so long away from England?
- 13 How does Gray suggest making up for them?
- 14 What hunt does Walpole give of his own importance in Paris?
- 15 Describe one of the Italian inns that they had to put up with on their journey home
- 16 Contrast it with the English inns to which he has returned
- 17 What is the reason he affects to give for loving London?
- 18 How does the arrangement of London differ from that of Continental capitals?
- 19 What are his complaints of country neighbours?
- 20 "Walpole at the fire" describe the scene in the words of an eye-witness
- 21 How did Walpole imitate his ancestor Noah?

B

- 1 What indications are there in these letters from Gray of certain differences between eighteenth century and modern methods of travel?
- 2 What is Gray's feeling for the scenery through which he is passing? Had he our modern appreciation of the Alps?
- 3 Gray's letter from Burnham gives us a certain amount of information as to his tastes and interests. How would you sum them up?
- *4 What are the characteristics of Gray's style? Can you discover a sense of humour in him?

6 From Walpole's letter to him what kind of man would you take Richard West to be?

5 What is it that makes Walpole's style so natural?

*7 What stand out in these letters as the marks of Walpole's personality? Compare him with Gray

8 Give Walpole's reasons for disliking his return journey. What are your views on the difference between an outward journey through new surroundings and the return?

9 Is Walpole a man to derive much benefit from his travels?

10 He has been dubbed the Prince of Gossips. Can you see why?

11 Is there any truth in the charges he makes against country people? Quote instances of what he means from your own reading or experience

12 Does he really dislike the country, or can you discover anything of a purpose in this letter?

*13 Is the secret of Walpole's popularity as a leader of society revealed in these letters?

14 Walpole was also the author of a novel *The Castle of Otranto*. Do you see in these letters any of the characteristics of a novelist?

C

*1 Compare Gray's description with Matthew Arnold's stanzas on the Grande Chartreuse²³

2 Read R. L. Stevenson's account of the monastery of Our Lady of the Snows and compare what it is that interests him there with Gray's letter²⁴

*3 Compare these with the other letters of travel in this volume remembering that these are the work of young men on their first tour of Europe

4 Can you see any resemblance between Gray's and Dr Johnson's, and between Horace Walpole's and Lady Montagu's?

5 What was the secret of the attraction of London for the literary men of the eighteenth century?¹⁰

6 Read some of Gray's poems for instance the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, *The Bard*, and the *Ode on a distant Prospect of Eton College*. Do they show the same temperament as these letters?⁹

7 What is the character of 'il penseroso'? Compare Milton's portrait of him with the impression you have of Gray

*8 What feeling for the beauties of nature do these letter-writers show? Compare it with (a) Cowper's (b) Wordsworth's^{25, 26}

VIII

THE LETTERS OF A POET WILLIAM COWPER

To the Revd William Unwin

August 6, 1780

My dear friend,

You like to hear from me — This is a very good reason why I should write—but I have nothing to say — This seems equally a good reason why I should not — Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—"Mr Cowper, you have not spoke since I came in, have you resolved never to speak again?"", it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons I should plead inability as my best and only excuse And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a Letter may be written upon any thing or nothing, just as that anything or nothing happens to occur A man that has a journey before him twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate, and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it, for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case A Letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed, not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a pro-

gress, and resolving, as a postillion does, having once set out, never to stop 'till we reach the appointed end If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say —“My good sir, a man has no right to do either ” But it is to be hoped, that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last, and so good Sir Lancelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the mean time to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch, smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens, and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their taste, should resemble us in any thing else But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly, and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it The inside of man at least has undergone no change His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were They wear perhaps a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore, for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior, but in every other respect a modern is only an ancient in a different dress

Yours,

W C

To the Revd John Newton

August 21, 1780

The following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met with. Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes, a voice on the outside of the parlour door enquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that having seen her, just after she dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimbler, and carrying less weight than Thomas, not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs, that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and puss—she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort—a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her, she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought

shelter in Mr Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr Drake's—Sturges's harvest-men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way There she encountered the tanpits full of water, and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her She was then well washed in a bucket, to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack, at ten o'clock

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we did not grudge a farthing of it The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever

I do not call this an answer to your Letter, but such as it is, I send it, presuming upon that interest, which I know you take in my minutest concerns, which I cannot better express than in the words of Terence, a little varied—*Nihil mei a te alienum putas* —Yours, my dear friend,

W C

To Mrs Newton

September 16, 1781

A noble theme demands a noble verse,
In such I thank you for your fine oysters
The barrel was magnificently large,
But being sent to Olney at free charge,
Was not inserted in the driver's list,
And therefore overlook'd, forgot, or missed,
For when the messenger whom we dispatch'd
Enquired for oysters, Hob his noddle scratch'd,
Denying that his waggon or his wain
Did any such commodity contain
In consequence of which, your welcome boon
Did not arrive till yesterday at noon,
In consequence of which some chanced to die,

And some, though very sweet, were very dry
Now Madam says, (and what she says must still
Deserve attention, say she what she will),
That what we call the Diligence, be-case
It goes to London with a swifter pace,
Would better suit the carriage of your gift,
Returning downward with a pace as swift,
And therefore recommends it with this aim—
To save at least three days,—the price the same,
For though it will not carry or convey
For less than twelve pence, send whate'er you may,
For oysters bred upon the salt sea shore,
Packed in a barrel, they will charge no more

News have I none that I can deign to write,
Save that it rained prodigiously last night,
And that ourselves were, at the seventh hour,
Caught in the first beginning of the show'r,
But walking, running, and with much ado,
Got home—just time enough to be wet through
Yet both are well, and wond'rous to be told,
Soused as we were, we yet have caught no cold,
And wishing just the same good hap to you,
We say, good Madam, and good Sir, Adieu!

To the Revd John Newton

Sept 18, 1784

My dear friend,

Following your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease 'till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that, in my judgment of it, has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing,

except the trouble of reading it But the case is altered now You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser

My greenhouse is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in the summer, when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower, in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive, I should hardly hear more of their music All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it, by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least in this country I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing, but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-yard, is no bad performer, and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest, on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all Seriously however, it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord

has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that some sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits. And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds, for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world, that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found, tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

W C

QUESTIONS

A

- 1 What is the common excuse of the man who does not wish to write letter?
- 2 How does Cowper prove it absurd?
- 3 What does he say is the natural and proper way to write a letter?
- 4 What is his description of the England of a century before his time? Can you make this more complete?
- 5 Some characteristics change from one generation to another. What, according to Cowper, are the things that change, and what are those that scarcely ever vary?
- 6 Describe Cowper's greenhouse and garden.
- 7 What are the sounds that he finds particularly musical?
- 8 What does he suggest would be the most terrible form of punishment that could be devised for man?

- 9 Tell the story of the escape of the hare
- 10 What is the subject of Cowper's verse letter?

B

1 'The simple operation of moving one foot forward and then the other' What exactly does Cowper mean? Show how it applies to this letter of his

2 Compare Cowper's opinion of letters and letter-writing with Dr Johnson's

3 How does Cowper show his true love of Nature?

4 Keeping in mind what Cowper says of their beauty and appropriateness write a composition upon "Sounds"

5 "The fields the woods the gardens have each their concert" make clear the truth of this

6 What is the verse form in which Cowper writes his letter?

7 What are the things that make this verse letter amusing?

8 There was in Cowper's character an unusual mixture of the grave and the gay Is this brought out anywhere in his letters?

9 From these letters what could you discover of Cowper's life, if you had no other means of finding out? What sketch could you give of his personality?

*10 Show how little information really forms the basis of Cowper's letters What is the secret of the ease with which he writes?

C

1 Enlarge this theme — A modern is only an ancient in different dress "

2 Can you quote passages from other poets to show their appreciation of the beauty of sounds?

3 What passages from the Bible has Cowper in mind when he refers to music in Heaven?

4 Do you see anything in these letters which reminds you of the Cowper who wrote *John Gulpin*?²⁵

5 Read *A Winter Morning's Walk* In what aspects of Nature is Cowper interested and how does he show his interest?²⁵

*6. Sum up the interests and attitude of the cultured eighteenth century letter-writer, distinguishing between those of the retiring country-lover (Cowper for example) and those of the traveller and society leader

7 For what purposes have you seen the letter-form used here? What general effects does purpose have upon style?

NOTES

1 JONATHAN SWIFT, Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, was one of the most influential men in London from 1710-13, but found time to write almost every day to his young friend Esther Johnson in Ireland

2 MD in Swift's letters stands for Stella and her companion Mrs Dingley, and sometimes for Stella alone

3 Swift is best remembered for *Gulliver's Travels*. He was feared in his own day for his bitter and cynical outlook on life, but these frank, informal letters to his intimate friends reveal a quite different and far more attractive personality

Gulliver's Travels was published anonymously in London in 1726, after Swift had returned to Dublin. But it was not difficult for his friends to detect the characteristics of his satire, and John Gay, the popular poet who wrote the *Beggar's Opera*, playfully describes to Swift the sensation caused in London by the new "anonymous" tale

4 Dr Arbuthnot was a celebrated friend of Swift and Pope, and a member with them of the famous literary coterie, the Scriblerus Club

5 ALEXANDER POPE, the most brilliant poet of the first half of the century, sharpened his wits upon the social and literary events and characters of London circles. Though he was as careful to polish his letters as to perfect his verse, it is a relief to turn from his sharp satire on his fellows to his more picturesque accounts of Oxford and his own garden at Twickenham. But here too he gives more than one sally of his quick wit

Pope had his letters published in his own life-time, so that he wrote and afterwards altered them with an eye to a wide public

15 Many of the novels of the time are written as a series of letters. That from FANNY BURNEY's *Evelina* is a letter written by the heroine, a country girl who has just arrived in London, to her guardian

19 *The birthnight* was the evening of the forthcoming birthday of George II, which he never attained, for he died a month after Lord Snakeskin ordered his silk, in 1760

26 LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU was the wife of the British ambassador to Constantinople, and so enjoyed an amount of travel in the East of which no other lady of her time could boast

She was an inexhaustible letter-writer and sent home to her friends a minute account of her experiences. She was for a long time the friend of Pope, but her sharp wit and her independence gave her enemies also. However good a traveller, she was not a graceful figure in an English drawing-room, according to Horace Walpole, who is always referring to her strident voice and her very poor taste in dress

27 *The empress* to whom Lady Montagu was presented was the mother of the famous and unfortunate Maria Theresa

28 *Peterwaradin* was a fortress of Hungary, captured and held for 160 years by the Turks, who dominated the Balkans for the greater part of three centuries. In 1716, however, the Turks were heavily defeated there

32 *Belgrade Village* was not, of course, the modern capital of Yugoslavia, but a little place between Constantinople and the Black Sea

35 *becafignas*, fig-peckers, small birds eaten in Italy

37 DR JOHNSON, the "great Cham" of literature in the eighteenth century, began his life in London in great poverty. His fame began to grow when he published his Dictionary, and it was on this occasion that he wrote the letter to Lord Chesterfield, who was ready to praise when other men did so, but had scorned to help an obscure and struggling author

In 1773, Johnson, who only rarely left London for any length of time, was persuaded by his young Scotch friend,

James Boswell, to visit the Hebrides Boswell was constantly at Johnson's side to note down his conversation and habits for the famous biography which he afterwards produced

- 50 THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD, a distinguished member of the House of Lords, and at one period Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, was a cultured and travelled man, and a polished orator Most of his interest was centred in his son, Philip, for whom he wrote a number of letters, instructing him in all the arts of the fine gentleman of eighteenth century society ✓ His hopes were doomed to failure, however, for the son became not a graceful member of fashionable London circles but a very ordinary bookworm, and died in 1768 The earl then adopted his godson as his heir, and began to bring him up on the same lines

Though we are apt to judge him by his lack of sympathy for Dr Johnson, Chesterfield undoubtedly possessed the art of making friends, and his letters prove him to have been a keenly observant man and a fluent and brilliant writer

- 58 Eighteenth century London was famous for its social gatherings, which, until 1750, were usually nothing more than prolonged card parties Certain leading hostesses, weary of being considered too inferior in learning to take part in the literary discussions of the men, began to arrange assemblies at which the better-read and more interesting of the ladies of the day met to discuss books, plays and affairs of state with the leading literary men of the time

The most famous of these ladies, MRS ELIZABETH MONTAGU, entertained in her two magnificent houses many a brilliant company, which included Dr Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Garrick the famous actor, Horace Walpole, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, the greatest painter of the day

- 58 *Betty Tulls working apparatus*—for the feather hangings

- 60 FANNY BURNEY found herself a famous authoress while still a girl in her 'teens *Evelina* is one of the most delight-

ful of English novels, and was followed by several more very nearly as popular. Then a position, seemingly of great honour but really of considerable hardship, was found for the young authoress as lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte. Fanny continued her tiresome and exacting work until her health broke down, when she was released.

- 65 HORACE WALPOLE and THOMAS GRAY had been school-fellows at Eton and set off together on the "grand tour" of France and Italy which, in the eighteenth century, completed every wealthy young man's education.

Gray afterwards returned to Cambridge where he remained all his life—a scholar and a poet. Horace Walpole, the son of a famous minister of state, possessed great wealth and built himself a house at Strawberry Hill, which, inside and out, was made to resemble as closely as possible a mediæval castle.

- 71 *emperors and czarnas* The Emperor Charles VI, and Anne, Empress of Russia, both died in October, 1740.

- 8 THE POET who wrote *John Gilpin*, *The Task*, and many pleasant poems of fireside and rustic life, is also known as the most delightfully natural of letter-writers. He writes from his country homes at Olney and Weston-under-wood, where the happier years of his life were passed uneventfully in study and gardening and the care of the hares that he tamed.

His interests lay chiefly in his reading, and in the characters and little excitements of village life, and in the society of his friend, Mrs Unwin. All this he weaves into the lightest and most graceful of letters.

- 9 *Steinkirk figure* Cowper refers to the days of William III whose reign was marked by more sober standards of living than those of the gay Restoration days. William was defeated in 1692 at the battle of Steinkirk in a campaign in the Netherlands against the French army of the Duke of Luxemburg.

LIST OF BOOKS SUGGESTED

The figures refer to those placed *after* questions headed "C "

- G Saintsbury *A Letter Book*
 E V Lucas *The Gentlest Art*
 Selections of Letters in "The World's Classics"
¹ Swift *Gulliver's Travels*
² Swift *Tale of a Tub*
³ Pope *Poems*
⁴ Addison *Essays* ("The Socrates Booklets")
⁵ Goldsmith *Citizen of the World*
⁶ Fanny Burney *Evelina*
⁷ Jane Austen *Sense and Sensibility*
⁸ Goldsmith *Poems*
⁹ Gray *Poems*
¹⁰ Boswell *Life of Johnson*
¹¹ Boswell *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*
¹² Hughes *Tom Brown's Schooldays*
¹³ George Eliot *Silas Marner*
¹⁴ Meredith *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*
¹⁵ Fielding *Tom Jones*
¹⁶ Overbury *Characters*
¹⁷ Steele and Addison *The Tatler*
¹⁸ Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*
¹⁹ Sheridan *The Rivals*
²⁰ Newman *Idea of a University*
²¹ Goldsmith *Vicar of Wakefield*
²² Hardy *The Trumpet Major*
²³ Matthew Arnold *Poems*
²⁴ Stevenson *Travels with a Donkey*
²⁵ Cowper *Poems*
²⁶ Wordsworth *Poems*
²⁷ Miegé *A Journey to Russia in 1663* ("The Socrates Booklets")

This list is not intended to be exhaustive